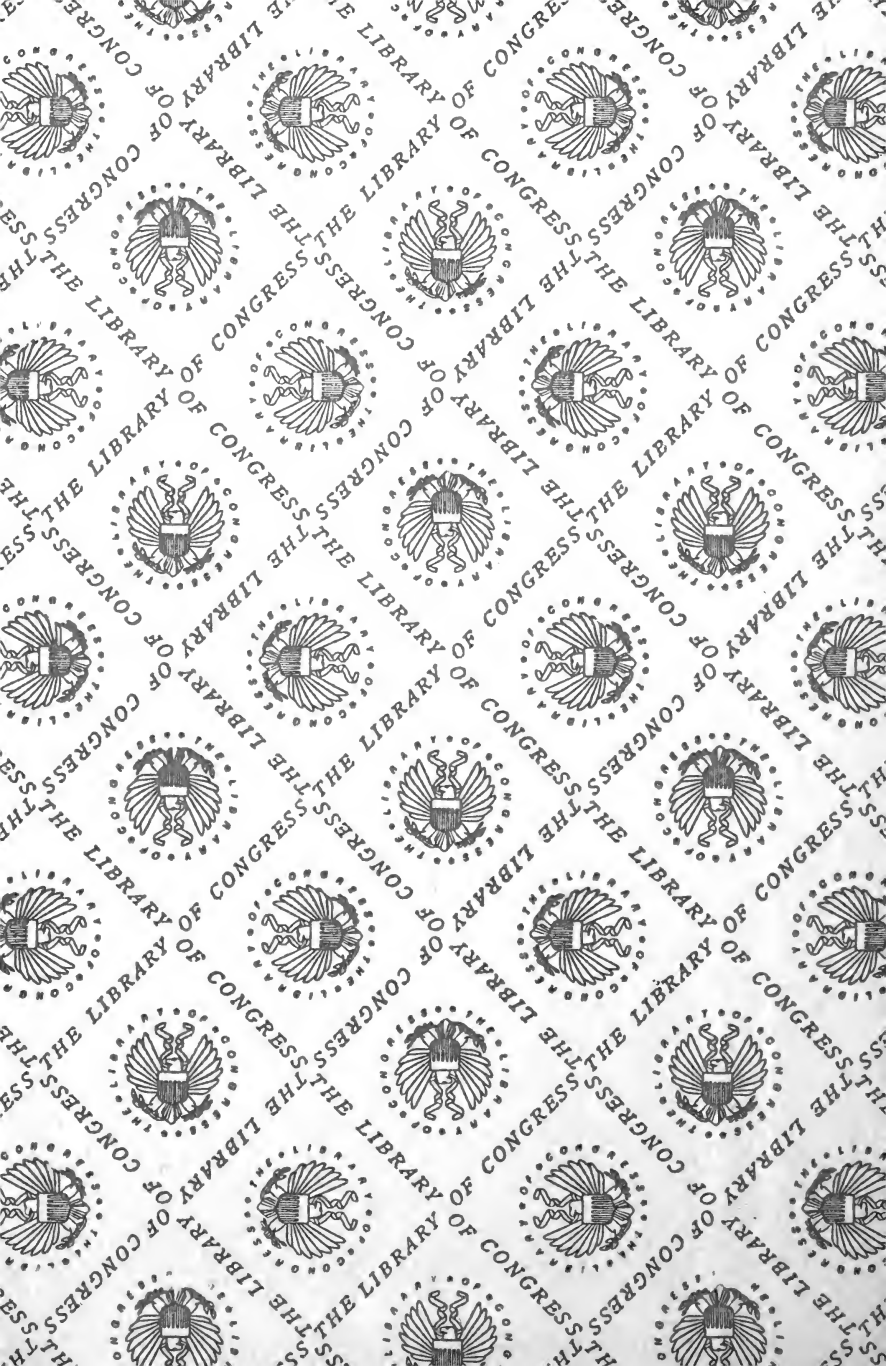
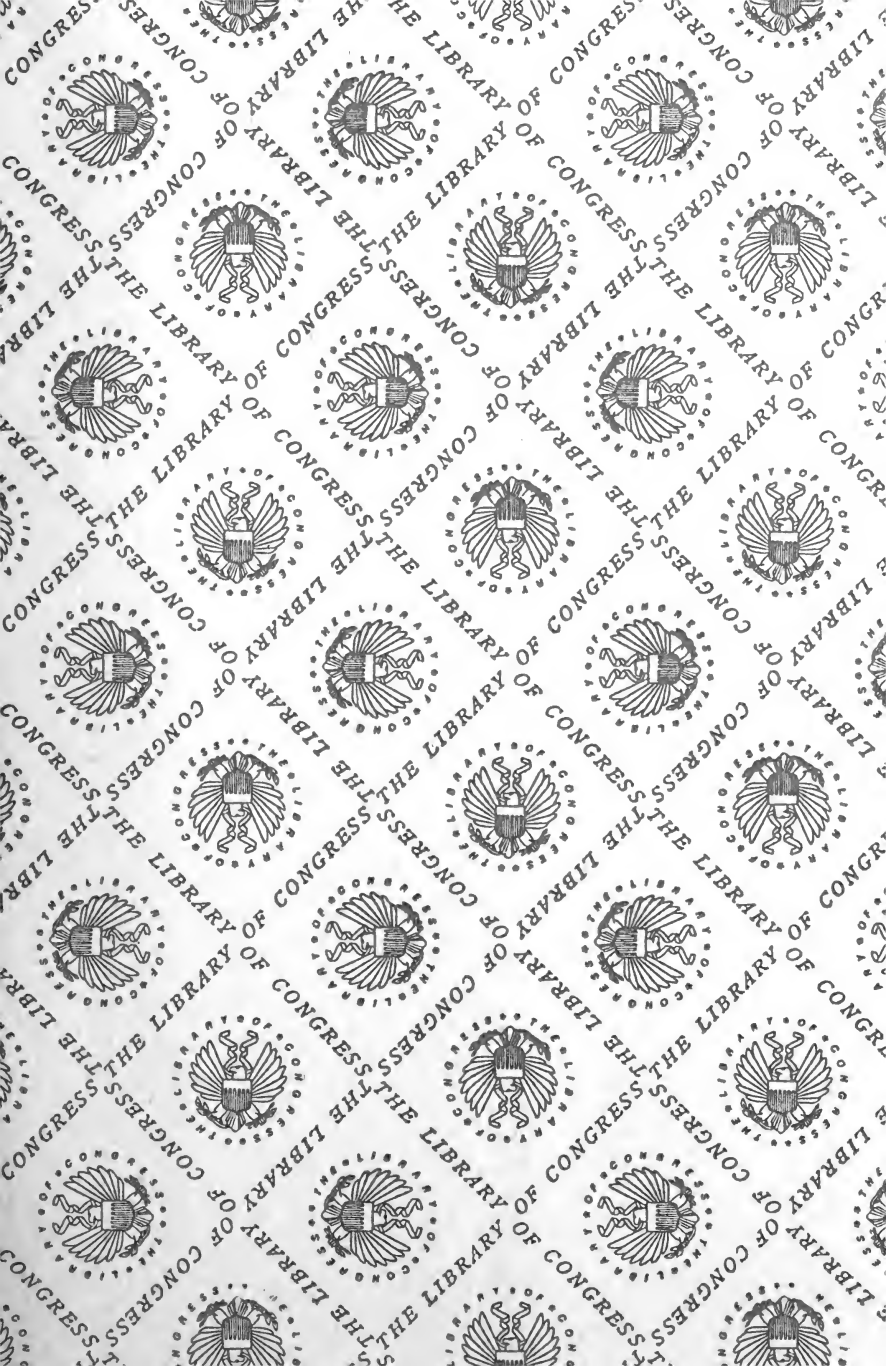


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ABELARD AND
HELOISE

ABELARD AND HELOISE

BY

RIDGELY TORRENCE

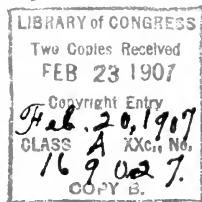


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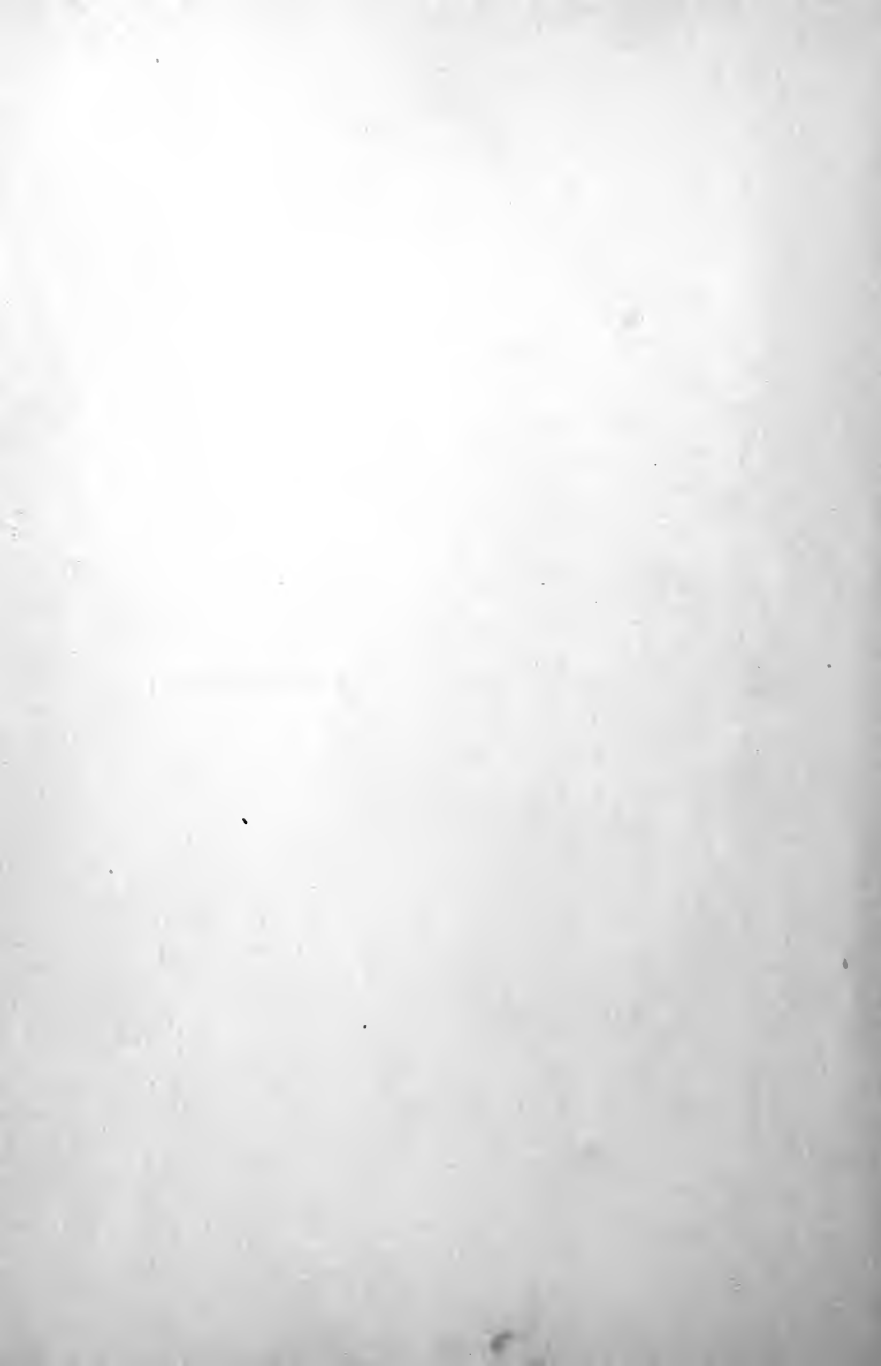
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TO
MADAME ALLA NAZIMOVA



SETTINGS

ACT I.—PARIS. THE OLD ISLE DE LA CITÉ. A
GARDEN COURT AMONG THE HOUSES BELONG-
ING TO THE CATHEDRAL OF NOTRE DAME.

(A fortnight passes.)

ACT II.—FULBERT'S VILLA AT CORBEIL.

(Three months pass.)

ACT III.—THE GARDEN OF THE ABBEY OF ARGEN-
TEUIL.

(Twenty years pass.)

ACT IV.—A ROAD NEAR CHÂLONS.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

FULBERT, Canon of Notre Dame.

PIERRE ABELARD, Master of the School of Notre Dame.

ARNULPH MALART, a priest of Notre Dame.

GERVASE, Abelard's favorite student and friend.

A BALLAD MONGER.

PETER, Abbot of Cluny.

LOUIS VII, SURNAMED THE YOUNG, King of France.

A PAGE.

A PAPAL NUNCIO.

AN ACOLYTE.

ASTROLOBUS.

HELOISE, niece of Fulbert.

LUCE, her friend and companion.

JEHANNE, a flower girl.

YSBEAU, a fruit vender.

GABRIELLA, Abbess of Argenteuil.

MONICA

CECILE

TERESA

} Young nuns in the Abbey of Argenteuil.

STUDENTS, TOWNS-PEOPLE, RELATIVES OF FULBERT, MONKS,
NUNS, SOLDIERS, COURTIER, ETC.

Time: First part of twelfth century.

ABELARD AND HELOISE

ACT I

A Court. Back is a high, massive stone wall in the centre of which is a gateway having a ponderous iron door which is now open disclosing a street. On the left of the court is the School of Paris into which leads a single doorway. On the right is the house of Fulbert, to which there is also a single door opening on the court, which is therefore completely surrounded by walls and has but the three exits. Leading to each of the doorways, both that of Fulbert's house and that of the school, there is a flight of several steps.

Ysbeau is seated upon the steps of the school, counting her fruits.

Enter from Fulbert's house Luce, bearing a jar from which she waters the flowers near the doorstep. Enter along the street the Ballad Monger, who halts in the gateway.

YSBEAU, to the Ballad Monger, offering her basket of fruit
Ho there, a quince!

BALLAD MONGER

A ballad for it.

YSBEAU

Done.

BALLAD MONGER, *coming forward and holding out his wares*
Make choice.

YSBEAU

The newest.

BALLAD MONGER, *giving her a bright parchment*
Here then.

He begins to select from her basket. Enter from the street Jehanne listlessly crying her wares.

JEHANNE

Marigolds—

She sees Ysbeau, who is busy with the Ballad Monger and does not notice her.

Ysbeau!

LUCE, *rising from the flower bed and coming to her*
Jehanne!

JEHANNE

My Luce—

They embrace and talk aside.

BALLAD MONGER, *bargaining with Ysbeau*
How many?

YSBEAU

One.

BALLAD MONGER, *eagerly*

Add then your lips.

YSBEAU, *evading him and running to the two girls*

What news?

The Ballad Monger goes to the school steps and lolls upon them, eating his fruit.

LUCE

The school yet holds;

The Master speaks to-day.

JEHANNE

When it is over——

She clasps her hands in ecstasy.

YSBEAU, *looking up at the school*

To think that cold stone husk could hold a lover.

JEHANNE

They think too much in there.

YSBEAU, *peering in at the door*

If I could see,

My thoughts would bring my Etienne out to me,

My boy, my rakehell blond——

A bell sounds.

JEHANNE and YSBEAU *together*

The hour!

LUCE, *who has been standing apart from them*

At last!

The Ballad Monger picks up his lute and ballads and rises briskly. Jehanne and Ysbeau join him at the school steps with great bustle of preparation.

YSBEAU

Get ready all!

BALLAD MONGER, *with great importance*
Form here the line.

JEHANNE

Where's Luce?

LUCE, *apart from them*
I have no wares to sell.

YSBEAU, *to the Ballad Monger, who gets in front of her*
Ha, not so fast—

Back, Ballads!

BALLAD MONGER, *with his attention eagerly upon the school doorway*
Here they come!

YSBEAU, *stamping on his toe*

Back Dreams.

BALLAD MONGER, *retreating with a start of pain*

The deuce!

*A party of students begins to enter noisily from the school,
and pass through the court into the street.*

JEHANNE, *holding up her basket*

Blooms—buds—

BALLAD MONGER

A rhyme—

YSBEAU

Apples—

BALLAD MONGER

And songs—

YSBEAU

A peach?

*Two students enter arm in arm and confront Ysbeau and
Jehanne.*

FIRST STUDENT

Ha! Lips and eyes!

YSBEAU

Fruits?

JEHANNE

Flowers?

BOTH GIRLS, *holding up their wares*

Which?

SECOND STUDENT

Both, from each!

The two students draw the two girls aside and talk. Luce still watches the school door. A scuffling is heard within and several students are hustled violently down the steps.

THE STUDENTS

Who pushes?

Voices from another group who follow them.

We!

FIRST GROUP

By what right?

SECOND GROUP

English brawn?

FIRST GROUP

We'll try it, Germans. Up, good fists.

SECOND GROUP

Come on.

Exeunt both groups brawling through the street gate. Enter from the school Gervase gayly dressed.

GERVASE

Air, air to breathe, I choke with smoke of thinking.

LUCE, *going to meet him*

Ah, my Gervase.

GERVASE

My Luce.

LUCE

What news?

They talk aside. Enter another group of students. Jehanne and Ysbeau leave the two students to whom they were talking.

JEHANNE

Buds?

YSBEAU

Grapes?

A STUDENT, *to both girls*

Hey, sweetmeats!

SECOND STUDENT

By St. John here's hues!

FIRST STUDENT

And shapes!

The two students come down the steps to the girls.

FIRST STUDENT, *to Jehanne*

Do I not know you?

The two talk aside to the girls.

BALLAD MONGER, *approaching Gervase, where he talks with Luce*

Music?

GERVASE, *looking him over with sublime insolence*

By what means?

BALLAD MONGER, *tapping his lute proudly*

This lute.

GERVASE, *pretending to examine it critically and then turning away*

A pumpkin.

BALLAD MONGER, *enraged*

Dancer of Orleans.

GERVASE, *turning upon him fiercely*

Goose Face of Paris, dare you utter quack;

I'll give you titles till your beak is black.

I, Gervase of this University,

Hold in zoölogy a high degree,

He affects to peer at the minstrel scientifically.

A head—claws—legs to hop with—ah, I see!

Species *verminibus*—a kind of flea.

The Ballad Monger retreats in confusion to the street and exit.

Gervase turns again to Luce.

A STUDENT, *entering from the school*

Where is my tidbit made of red and white?

*Jehanne greets him with a glad cry and embraces him.
Enter another student.*

SECOND STUDENT, *ecstatically*

Ysbeau!

YSBEAU, *rushing forward to him*

Ah boy!

STUDENT

You waited?

YSBEAU

Kiss me.

He kisses her.

ANOTHER STUDENT, *looking at them*

Jesu!

ONE OF THE STUDENTS, *talking aside to Jehanne and
Ysbeau*

To-night—at the mid-hour—you and Jehanne
She bides to-night with Luce—there is her window.

He points to Fulbert's house.

'Tis high, but I am Michael with the ladder.

YSBEAU

O craft!

SECOND STUDENT

But soft—or Luce will learn of it—
Hist—close—then shall we melt into the night
And dance till early gray.

JEHANNE

But the gate's locked
At night.

FIRST STUDENT, *holding up a great key*

The key!

JEHANNE

O wonder.

YSBEAU

And be ready

JEHANNE

I must be mouse and never waken Luce,
She'd never let me go.

The four draw toward the gate, whispering beside it. Gervase and Luce come down front talking earnestly. A great anxiety is upon Luce's face.

GERVASE

O smile sad Queen, it has not fallen yet.

LUCE

The buzzing grows, the town is held at bay,
But for the proof's lack though they know the truth,
And Fulbert cannot be forever deaf.

GERVASE, *losing his effrontery for an instant*

Poor Master—

LUCE

Ah, poor Mistress.

GERVASE, *recovering his assurance*

We shall save them,
He speaks once more to-day. I go. A kiss.

They kiss and he re-enters the school.

JEHANNE, *from the gateway*

Till the hour ends let's go outside and sell.

To Luce.

I'll not forget our night my Luce. Farewell.

Exit Jehanne, Ysbeau, and the two students with them. As they go out the Ballad Monger re-enters from the street.

BALLAD MONGER, *to Luce, eyeing the departing girls*
Fine fruits, fine flowers.

LUCE

Then take a care.

BALLAD MONGER

And why?

I have my arts, I too can sing and sigh
As well as——

He leers at her meaningly.

LUCE

Who?

BALLAD MONGER, *insolently*

The Master.

LUCE, *with assumed carelessness*

Piteous fool,

Have you a meaning?

BALLAD MONGER

Yes, there is a school.

Pointing to the school doorway.

The school must have its master.

He turns away sniggering and picking at his lute.

LUCE

Well?

BALLAD MONGER, *returning to her*

You follow?

Singing.

The highest tower will nest its homing swallow.

Suddenly speaking again.

You have a mistress.

LUCE

Ah!

BALLAD MONGER

She has a heart.

And you? O ho! the nut is cracked—you start!

Now buy a song, in these the kernel is;

Here—

Selecting parchments from his pack and reading.

A to H—or these!—

LUCE, *staring at the parchments*

No more—

BALLAD MONGER

Or this!

One thrush sang all of these, and to one rose;

You know them both; here's one, mark how it flows;

Reading.

A Shadow to its Moon

Putting it back in his package.

In words that wing it,

Shadow's a man, the moon's a maid—I'll sing it.

Luce retreats, putting her fingers to her ears.

No? Then I'll speak, now am I wise or dull?

'Tis your own moon whether at dark or full.

Luce starts wildly toward the door of Fulbert's house, but he follows her to the steps and calls after her.

'Twas made by Master Abelard to your lady,
I found them by the wall—the music's mine,
But I have left their names, full credit's given.

Shouting.

The town's afire—it sells—folks have their proof.

Exit Luce. While he has been speaking, Malart has appeared in the street gateway and he has crept furtively and fiercely behind the singer, whom he now springs upon and throttles savagely.

BALLAD MONGER

What—God's my throat—whose hand—ah—you

As the minstrel struggles in the monk's powerful grasp, Fulbert appears in the doorway of his house and speaks from the threshold.

FULBERT

Malart!

The monk releases his hold on the man.

BALLAD MONGER, *reeling and foaming with rage*

Ah—and so you—white slippery—faugh—I faint—
Drab sweat of the church—you've greased the walls
too long.

You'll be well dried for this if I can reach——

Dragging out a dagger.

Here's iron shall drain you well if——

FULBERT

Out!

The Ballad Monger totters out into the street, cursing beneath his breath, but stricken with fear of Fulbert.

Zealot,

You seem consumed with a fever of Paradise
For other souls.

MALART, *desperately excited*

Fulbert, your niece——

FULBERT

God's life!

How dare you name her!

MALART, *recovering some calmness and looking at him*

Blind—beyond reason—blind.

FULBERT

Can there be reason in a useless death
Or meaning in such an eye all crimson fused?

MALART

Yes, I have meanings; O I burst with meanings.

FULBERT

What then—give light or live to know what dark is.
Pour forth.

MALART

You heard no singing?

FULBERT

Where?

MALART

Where?

All, all about us, outside in the sun.

FULBERT

Speak out.

MALART

I cannot, for you have no ears.

FULBERT

Then shall you have no eyes, for in this hour
Deep in the altar crypt beneath the pulpit—

MALART

What! Do you dream that I, Malart, could fear?
I, who have racked sides and bosom torn.
From whose wide woe blood comes continually
That God may take His ease and be at peace.
I who would go down glad and glorying
To whistling hell and make its hurricane
One soul the hotter at Christ's most faint request,
You threat me with a fear!

FULBERT

You rave.

MALART

No, no.

But never by shudders or dread could I be moved.

FULBERT, *craftily*

Then by your duty.

MALART

By my duty, hear me:

There was a singing here some moments past.

'Twas sung to no one, and the air dissolved it.

Not so last night.

FULBERT

Talk not of air.

MALART

Last night

The same song grew, and maddened in the dark

One sang it and another one embraced it—

And him—O him!

FULBERT

Who?

MALART

Our poor Abelard.

FULBERT

Well, name the other.

MALART

Thy dead brother's daughter.

FULBERT

Ha—Venom—hast spit? My Heloise!

MALART

I knew

There would be to my words no wakening.

FULBERT

Can you so stand and breathe and breathe and
speak this,
And live?

MALART

Yea, and so speak through all my days
And say no word but truth.

FULBERT

Who saw? Who heard?

MALART

I and all Paris save only you alone.

FULBERT, *clutching at him*

More—lest I tear your maddening tongue from you.

MALART, *with malicious deliberation*

It happened thus and so——

FULBERT

Pause once and I——

MALART

Was it not night, were not they two alone?

FULBERT

Where?

MALART

On the stones that bear us even now.

FULBERT

Here!

MALART

Even beneath this wall.

FULBERT

When?

MALART

Night by night.

FULBERT

And you?

MALART

—Watch from the grating of my cell
Until each glides beside the scornèd Church,
And in the dark two mouths find one another.
Then do they two pass outward to the town,
To come no more till dawn.

FULBERT

Can so much fire
Come from so cold a thing as you to gnaw me?

MALART

Will you have proof?

FULBERT, *picking at his throat*

Breath! Breath! Let me awake!

MALART

To-night they come.

FULBERT

The hour?

MALART

I cannot tell.

Deep at my prayers I in the shadow will lurk
Until their souls, like swift unhallowed wings,
Shall bear them flaming to the garden here.
Then I shall rouse you——

A bell sounds in the school.

MALART

Ah, the bell—keep silence.

The murmur of the forthcoming students is heard inside the school and grows louder.

He will come forth—silence and watchful eyes.

Luce appears in doorway of Fulbert's house.

FULBERT, *to Luce*

Bring here your mistress.

Exit Luce into house.

She—my hope most hidden
To pour down richness on me from a throne—
A penniless schoolman—and in guilt besmudged—
O she who was a white thing snowed upon—
The Treasury of France was my one price!
Now with a mouth fed scarlet-hot with guilt,
Who'll pay a starveling red to buy her up?

MALART, *insidiously*

He—

FULBERT

He! and goes very white and smoothly—he!
O Dreams, my Dreams that would have brought me
crowns
Come back and doom him. Whips of Fire, what
griefs
Will stab him dreadfulest? What thing will tear him
Slowest, and what will feed his agony?
Him—and goes very softly—him—O God——

MALART

Hold—he will now come forth, and she too comes.
Observe them here together in the sun.
Watch then the forcèd motion of their eyes
That will beyond their wills unclasp their secret.

He draws Fulbert up stage to a corner of the court. They talk apart. A murmur from the town outside as of many people approaching is heard faintly. Enter several students from the street. Enter to them two students from the school.

A STUDENT

You heard?

SECOND STUDENT

We read.

THIRD STUDENT, *one of the party from the street*

The city is a bell

Sounding the sorrow of it.

FOURTH STUDENT, *from the school*

O my master

Must we be helpless while you suffer thus?

SECOND STUDENT

The thing has seethed too long without a proof;
The city hastens here to look upon them.

FIRST STUDENT

What will the end be?

THIRD STUDENT

If the school goes down,
The world will be extinguished in its fall.

While they have been talking the murmur from the town has increased and now a great number of towns-people, men and women enter from the street talking excitedly among themselves. They arrange themselves en masse in the gateway and against Fulbert's house, looking expectantly at the school door. The students begin to enter from the school. Jehanne and Ysbeau enter from the street.

VOICES AMONG THE TOWNS-PEOPLE

He fears to come.

Not he. Have patience.

Back!

A BURGHER, *to one next him*

If you stand here, your eyes shall well behold him.

SECOND BURGHER

How shall I know him?

FIRST BURGHER

Easily by his face,
Resembling much St. Raphael, the angel,
Save for the darker hair.

A WOMAN

May Mary shield her!

THIRD BURGHER

This is a sad thing that he leads the youth.
And such a free life too.

FOURTH BURGHER

I never knew.

THIRD BURGHER

Friend, are you deaf? It has been mouthed about
These many months.

FOURTH BURGHER

I never heard before.

THIRD BURGHER.

Have you a wife?

FOURTH BURGHER

No.

THIRD BURGHER

Therein lies your deafness.
There's not a dame in Paris but could tell you.

FOURTH BURGHER, *looking about*

They seem to be all here.

SECOND BURGHER

This is the first
That they've had proof of it. The ballads tell.

FIRST BURGHER

They come to see now with more intimate eyes,

FOURTH BURGHER

'Tis a most trying hour for bachelors.

The students have been entering from the school singly. Now a large group enter looking back deferentially. Last of all Abelard appears in doorway talking to Gervase.

VOICES FROM STUDENTS

Master! Hail Mighty Greek!

O Herald of Reason!

Plato of Paris!

Socrates of Gaul!

Abelard stands dreamily looking about him as though he has heard nothing. The cries cease. The crowd is tense with curiosity and the excitement of expectancy. They cast curious but fearful looks on Fulbert, who stands aside from them.

ABELARD

Late afternoon.

A WOMAN

He muses.

ABELARD

—Afternoon!

O here dwelt truth glowing while we within
All shivering piled up stony word on word,
Prisoners of yesterday. *He pauses.*

VOICES AMONG STUDENTS

Discourse! Discourse!

ABELARD

Of what?

GERVASE

Of anything in earth or heaven,
So your gemmed utterance will pour forth magic.

FOURTH BURGHER

Ha, Magic!

THIRD BURGHER

Yea.

FOURTH BURGHER

Will he not burn for it?

A WOMAN

He burns already with a deeper flame.

ABELARD

Yield to this air, it is your necromancer.

JEHANNE, *approaching him timidly and offering him a
lily from her basket.*

Master, this flower——

ABELARD

Jehanne,
How white a gift for me.

A STUDENT

Master, speak on.
Yield us the wisdom of old days.

ABELARD

Old days!

Summer is here and the world is full of sun,
And here's a flower.

FOURTH BURGHER

Strange words for schoolmen's ears!

THIRD BURGHER

'Tis but of late that he has spoken so
Since——

SECOND BURGHER

Yes and wisely said that it was "since"—

GERVASE, *in a low voice to Abelard*

Have care, confuse them with a mist of words,
Mask all your meanings in imaginings,
And all this danger will be yawned away.

ABELARD

Sheathe for the day your tablets and your pens,
Wisdom lies open here through other doors.

A STUDENT, *to him*

What doors are those?

ABELARD

Are you a lover?

STUDENT, *in some confusion*

Yes.

ABELARD

Then look on learning with a lover's eyes,
Then will gold Helen come down the wind to you
And in the sanguine tumult of a rose
Be throned forever.

STUDENT

Would it win my love
To deeper loving?

ABELARD

It would light you both
To wiser vision. Plato out of the air
Will brighten. And royal doom-red Babylon
Rise in the twilight out of a dove's throat.
In a heaved sea-wave you shall see blue Tyre
Built and destroyed again——

THE STUDENT

I'll watch for it——

SECOND STUDENT

Hush, for he speaks again!

ABELARD

——and in the night
You shall look up with wonder on the sky
Seeing it all alive, and upon the stars
The sigh-warm kisses of lovers long asleep.

And you shall question the moon what secret thing
Moves in the phantom marble of her smile,
And she shall answer you.

FOURTH BURGHER

What words are these?

*Heloise appears in the doorway of her uncle's house and
pauses behind the people, looking at them.*

THIRD BURGHER

Say rather what thing pales his face.

A STUDENT

Ho, look!

Our Lady of Wonder is come down to us!

*Heloise comes quickly and impulsively toward her uncle,
but as she nears him she is stopped by the suppressed fury
of his countenance. Abelard does not look at her but sees all.*

GERVASE

Master, we wait.

A STUDENT

Behold now how his eyes are wrapped away,
And that tall spirit that so quickened us
Is fallen on dream.

A WOMAN, *to him*

The smouldering of his face—
Watch that—look close—then turn and look at her!

HELOISE, *to her uncle*

You sent for me?

FULBERT

To take the air, the wind
Has changed.

HELOISE

Yes, so it has, and is more heavy.
I interrupt a lecture.

FULBERT

No, we waited.

HELOISE, *looking about*

I see new faces at the school to-day;
A full attendance. Let us make them gifts.
I'll purchase fruits and flowers. Jehanne! Ysbeau!

JEHANNE AND YSBEAU, *approaching her*
Lady?

HELOISE

Bring your baskets, I take all.

JEHANNE

Ah, Lady——

HELOISE

Colors and sweetness—all I take them.
Bring all.

YSBEAU

'Tis pity.

JEHANNE

Vanished!

They hold up their baskets empty.

HELOISE

Empty!

YSBEAU

Mine

Fed many mouths.

JEHANNE

Many hands needed mine.

Heloise turns from them. All watch her and Abelard in silence.

A STUDENT

Is she not infinite?

SECOND STUDENT

Ay.

FIRST STUDENT

And fair?

SECOND STUDENT

Most sweetly.

THIRD STUDENT

The master's lips are mute, let her address us.

SEVERAL STUDENTS

Ay, ay, beseech her!

FIRST STUDENT

Gervase, do you ask her;
Plead for some words, you honey-tongue.

GERVASE, *bursting with anxiety*

With a will.

He approaches Heloise and kneels before her with his gayest manner.

Lady of Lore, Lady of Secret Light,
Gallic Minerva, Pallas reborn of Love,
Bright Oracle, discourse!

HELOISE

O boundless folly
Even to ask it! I am one of you.

GERVASE

Not so, the moon's between and the blue vast.

He contrives to whisper to her aside.

They watch. Do not disclose yourself but blind
them.

Feed them with dreams, stay them with poetry,
Grow thoughts and hide your heart beneath them.

FULBERT

Speak!

HELOISE, *slowly turning*

Of what?

A VOICE

Life! Life!

A STUDENT

Nay, of philosophy.

GERVASE

Nay, of that burning essence called the soul.

HELOISE

But in what way?

GERVASE

It is divisible;

The parts thereof being the fixed emotions,
We pray you speak of them.

And how

GERVASE

They are
Pity and Hate and Hope, Despair and Fear.

HELOISE

I might speak then of Pity.

GERVASE

By all means.

HELOISE

I would it were a flower that I might gather.

Her voice breaks. She turns to her uncle.

I pray you let me go.

FULBERT

Remain, instruct us.

HELOISE

Pity's no thing to speak of, but to show.

FULBERT

To whom?

HELOISE

Sorrow should teach it.

FULBERT

So? What sorrow?

HELOISE

That which all mortal things have felt; I dream
That even from the insensible things of the world
Pity flows always, out of all the seas.
And surely the moon is a good giver of it,
And certain stars and winds. This will suffice.

FULBERT

We hope for more.

GERVASE

Pray speak of hope.

She stands silent.

FULBERT

We wait.

HELOISE

You ask me as a catechist or judge,
Not as one seeking wisdom.

FULBERT

I so thirst
After more knowledge that if you are dumb
I'll find it elsewhere.

HELOISE, *desperately*

Let me speak instead.
Then we shall all disperse. The day is ended.
Why should we wait? What would you have me
say?

GERVASE *in a low voice to her*

More poetry,—give them no chance to grasp you.

FULBERT

Never leave now. Despair and Hate and Fear
Have not been touched on.

HELOISE

Fear is but a wind.
Blows out of nowhere.

FULBERT

Have you never felt it?

HELOISE

Do not a myriad ghosts within us dwell,
Ancestral vapors unto whom the soul

Bows ever like a reed? What living thing
That lifts its head up in the white day air
Shudders not at the dark that does upbear it
And beckons it again? Not in our minds,
But in our minds' foundations Fear must lurk.

FULBERT

Despair comes next.

A STUDENT

What, then, shall be its image?

HELOISE, *turning slowly to her uncle*
I never knew its face, nor ever shall know

FULBERT

Still there is Hate——

HELOISE

Where?

FULBERT

Yet to be sounded.

HELOISE

Ah, then I'll speak of it; Hate is a pool
All of whose streams run backward. He who looks
May, deep within, see mirrored from its banks
A downward tower built to find a heaven;
And all the stars in venom are made strange.
This then completes the score.

A VOICE

A cheer.

HELOISE, *attempting to go*

Farewell.

The students applaud wildly, but as she turns to go Malart approaches and stands in her way.

MALART

Never end so until the end is reached.

HELOISE

But I have finished.

MALART

Still we listen and stay

To know of the one faculty of the soul

Exceeding all the rest, eclipsing, glowing,

In which the whole is compassed and made warm.

HELOISE

You veil your words.

MALART

Yet speak of it.

HELOISE

And how?

What is it?

MALART

Must I then declare it to you ?

HELOISE

I grope for meaning in you.

MALART

Then I must.

My meaning is an infinite faculty,
A mystery, a cloud, a fire, a wound
That I, walking among mankind, observe
It has been named——

The voice of the Ballad Monger, singing outside in the street one of Abelard's songs.

MALART

But hark, it names itself.

BALLAD MONGER, *appearing in the gateway*

Songs new and old by Master Abelard,
The famous poet to his famous lady.

Abelard and Heloise stand on opposite sides of the court, white and rigid. All are held spellbound till the song ends, then instantly all is confusion. The crowd begins to leave the court, talking among themselves.

HELOISE, *with great difficulty*

Mine is a woman's head and will not bear
A too great subtlety. I weary.

*With a pretense of calmness she enters her uncle's house.
As the towns-people depart, a bell sounds and the students*

separate from them and enter the school, followed by Abelard. Finally all have departed save Fulbert, Malart, and a porter who closes and locks the great iron gate of the wall and then enters the school. Fulbert has had his eyes fixed upon his door since Heloise entered it. He now starts fiercely toward it.

MALART, *stopping him*

Wait!

Fulbert slowly turns and goes out with a gesture of desperation. Malart is left alone. The stage is gradually darkened until all light is extinguished. It is kept dark for a minute to denote the passing of several hours. Then it is slowly suffused with moonlight. The watch is heard in the street intoning the hour; his lantern, hung at the top of a pike, is seen above the wall passing slowly. A pause. Voices singing to the lute are heard approaching in the street. As they get nearer they are suddenly hushed. A muffled knocking is heard on the outside of the gate. Enter a student from the school and advancing toward the gate, waits a moment, upon which the knocking is again sounded. The student thereupon produces the key, unlocks the gate and with a mighty pull and heave the ponderous door swings slowly inward, admitting, staggering and panting with suppressed laughter and their exertions, Ysbeau, and her student lover dragging a ladder after them. The first student whistles and Jehanne appears at an upper window in Fulbert's house. The student places the ladder, Jehanne climbs down and all run laughingly out into the street, taking the ladder and pulling the gate shut after them without locking it. A

pause. Enter Heloise from her uncle's house. She walks eagerly around the court but finds it empty. As she nears the doorway of the school Abelard appears within it. He comes swiftly toward her.

ABELARD

Sorceress, Priestess, Child——

HELOISE

You, you——

ABELARD

O Fire!

HELOISE

O Wind that blows this Fire where he listeth.

ABELARD

You are the sea from which that Wind arose.

HELOISE

If I the sea, then you the heavens that feed me;
Your arms the shores of me, and in that home
Lo, all my tides are folded to content.

ABELARD

By Fire, by Wind, by Sea I swear to hold you
Safely within that margin while your deeps
Have wildness to be lulled or peace to fathom.

HELOISE

Beyond! Beyond! O keep me while we are
A part of this dear world, and when you leave it,
O be the sun and draw me after you.

ABELARD

I am impetuous to be that glory
That I may blaze upon you, being cloud;
And see those treasures still unknown to me,
Who am but coast and beaches to you now.

HELOISE

Ah, you have tamed the farthest wave of me,
And what poor shells I nurtured you have burnished
Till they are pearls that I may wear for you.

ABELARD

O jewel-guarding sea, your stillnesses
Hold something more than I shall ever find.

HELOISE

If any richness in me still withholds
I am not mindful of it, and it waits
Until your need shall summon it to life.

ABELARD

Thus you surpass me in sweet images.

HELOISE

I would not have you find my words so cold
As any image is, but have you hold them
My very self, to see and know me yours.

ABELARD

And are you?

HELOISE, *causing him to look in her eyes*
See.

ABELARD

O find new words to tell me.

HELOISE

Teach me.

ABELARD

I cannot, I have learned from you.
You whom I taught with Sibyls did consort,
With witchery touched my eyes and with your mouth
Fused with the glad world all my breathing clay.

HELOISE

I was the clay and you the quickening flame.

ABELARD

Out of that South which was your burning presence
I was enkindled.

HELOISE

Have you not become
The very South itself in tenderness?

ABELARD

You wear within your eyes the fervid West;
From dawn the East has clothed you on with white-
ness,
The North with strength.

HELOISE

Ah no, I would not be
Thus gloriously apparelled with the sky
Lest I be held from walking on this world
That you make heaven of, my Abelard.

ABELARD

I have cast off that world for great Love's sake
And have relinquished all my mighty dreams.

HELOISE

The dreams?

ABELARD

All thought, all hope of earthly prizes.
The hollow, moonless, bleak frontier of reason
Shall never know me more as habitant,
Lifting cold disputations to my lips,
Thirsting for unfound wine. O most high Love!
Unconquerable Sweet! Imperial Wind!
How you do blow the thistledown ambition
Into the white, desire-receiving air!

HELOISE, *after a pause in which she looks long at him as though to search his inmost heart*

You cannot put ambition by, O Love,
Nor is there need of it, but it shall be
A thing I'll share with you.

She pauses again and then proceeds.

And you I'll share
With all the world.

ABELARD

I do not need that world.

HELOISE

You are the world's.

ABELARD

I sought a greater glory
Than it can give, and I have found it here
Low in your eyes, and now I long to see
Only the vivid love upon your brow
Poised there forever in soft flame to live.

HELOISE

Earth is your dwelling and your meat and drink;
Let not your need but, the world's need of you,
Be your one star.

ABELARD

That star is vanished now.
The power, the applause, the papal sovereignty
Have to dull embers fallen before your face.

HELOISE, *slowly*

The papal sovereignty, my Abelard!

She looks fearfully at him.

That is a prize for priests.

ABELARD, *moodily*

I had thought upon it.

HELOISE

But you are all a man and not a priest.

ABELARD

I had given it thought, and yet—I put it by.

HELOISE, *desperately*

O put it by until the end of time;
You are not made for cloisters, and within them
How could I share with you?

ABELARD

I'll think no more
Upon it. There are other roads to fame.

HELOISE

And you shall take them; but on this dear night
Let us lock out the world and its poor laurels,
Being together with what is ours alone.

ABELARD, *returning from his abstraction*

The world is dimmed before your dreaming face,
Whereon a flame rests by whose radiance
I see, I hear, I feel with wakened senses
The voice under the voices of the wind,
The whiteness and hush of wings within the dawn,
The very sun at noon as a god imparadised,
And the red West at the day's end—a rose.

HELOISE

All these Love brings indeed, but if he came
A piteous beggar he would be as welcome
Since you have brought him.

ABELARD

Would I might bring more.

HELOISE

What more than this?

ABELARD

An echoing, endless flame
To spread as clouds beneath your going forth.

HELOISE, *after a pause*

You have laid upon me even now a thing
Almost too heavy for my womanhood—
If I be worthy—worthy in some measure—
It is enough—within so small a space.

She turns away.

ABELARD

How can these walls contain so wild a thing?

HELOISE, *returning*

Oh, you have opened all the doors of air,
And all the thousand paths the moon comes down
Have wide-flung gates that lead unto the sky——

ABELARD

As though to call us to some heaven there.

HELOISE

Ah no, our heaven is here; those tender fires
Blaze with sweet envy on us, and are fed
By what we show them more than what they are.

ABELARD

How the night hours and all the star-sweet heaven
Pour down your infinite presence with a cry!
How now my eyes do see! How they were blinded!
The noon-like blaze of glories that allured me,
Fade in the least wind from before those deeps.

HELOISE

See how the stars with myriad blossoms breathe
Out of the wreathing arch that seems to bend
More tenderly wherever you appear.

ABELARD

Would I might gather those white blooms for you
From out the fields and meadows of the night.

HELOISE

It seems as we had sown them long ago—

ABELARD, *dreamily*

And we shall reap them in a time to come.

HELOISE, *starting with a shudder*

✓ Let us not think of any hour but this.

*She turns anxiously toward her uncle's house, then toward
the school, and returns to Abelard.*

Go now within and see if all is well.

ABELARD

I left all sleeping.

HELOISE

Yet I beg you go.

I, too, will now patrol my uncle's halls,
Lest any eyes lurk there that so beset us;
For I am weighted with an unnamed fear.
All knew on yesterday save he alone,
And he suspected.

ABELARD

My lost songs being found
Was almost proof.

HELOISE

He may not wait for more.

Go now——

She embraces him.

ABELARD

And come again?

HELOISE

Unfailingly.

ABELARD

Love me through that eternity that will be
While we are separate.

HELOISE

You shall never leave me,
For here I bear you though our ways be wide.

She touches her breast. Abelard leaves her and goes into the school. Heloise goes toward the door of her uncle's house. She is about to enter when she is suddenly confronted with Malart, who stands in the doorway. She stops. He comes slowly down to her.

MALART

You keep late hours.

HELOISE

I keep my own.

MALART

You dream.
To prayers belong your hours, get you back to them,
Lament, plead, agonize and beg for mercy.

HELOISE

Of whom?

MALART

Of all the pallid host of intercessors.

HELOISE

Among whom you are one?

MALART

I seek to save.

HELOISE

I have come out to be alone in the wind.

MALART

You have come out like Lilith for a lure.
So at last you start! So at last you are awakened!
Oh, rouse, return, repent in time for grace!

HELOISE

Is it for this that you have followed me?

MALART

I follow God's voice only.

HELOISE

If He called you
His voice is a false thing.

MALART

O profanation!

HELOISE

Will you go back and leave me?

MALART

Not until
I have my charge delivered and made plain,
Thou scarlet thing. O ruthless Babylonian,
Wilt thou with thy mad lips and chaining arms
Drag down to utter torment God's appointed?
Wilt thou persist in being woman only
And therefore be hell's minion? On thy knees,
Oh, purge thee of thyself! Cry! Tear thy flesh!
Creep to a desert and there abide alone
While thy endooming beauty is upon thee!

HELOISE

Malart, I would that I might talk with you.

MALART

Then speak.

HELOISE

It is impossible.

MALART

And why?

HELOISE

Speaker and auditor need a mutual tongue.

MALART

You deem me not book-learned? You deem me
deaf?

I understand enough to see most clearly
The two diverse wide roads to heaven and hell
And they that walk thereon.

HELOISE

I pray have done.

MALART

You will not go?

HELOISE

When I have breathed more freely.

MALART

Beware, beat no more words upon me. Go—
I am the Church's wolf to guard her altar,
And I may bare my teeth.

HELOISE

So! In what way?

He does not answer.

You are friend to Abelard?

MALART

I am friend to God,
And He shall have His own.

HELOISE

He shall indeed;
But you, His self-appointed deputy,
Are blind unto the way that He has chosen.

MALART

There is but one way and a narrow one.

HELOISE

It lies——?

MALART

Through quiet cells of full renouncement.

HELOISE

And leads?——

MALART

To heaven.

HELOISE

Even you have shed
One ray of truth. He will need all of heaven;
But there your truth ends. First he needs this earth,
And all it holds will not suffice for him.

MALART

And you, the giver?

HELOISE

I am part of earth.

MALART

For once, recall your mind. Within the house
Sleep Fulbert and Suspicion, bedfellows—
If I now call them——

HELOISE

And what then?

MALART

Thou fool!

Consider thy position under the stars.
Soon will the clock beat one and you are here—
Come hither upon a purpose bent, which Fulbert,
To the sum of his suspicion adding it,
Must know to be a tryst.

HELOISE

Will he think harm
That Night and I are alone here in the court?

MALART

The court upon which opens Abelard's door.

HELOISE

Doors have an exit where an entrance is!

MALART, *aside*

Ha! Is it so?

HELOISE

This is enough. No more.

Go back. Sleep. Pray. Do anything—but leave me.

MALART

And I do what I do with your consent?

HELOISE

Only to have you leave me.

MALART

You have spoken.

HELOISE, *suddenly seized with a suspicion*

Ha! You would dare to whisper to my uncle?
Then think on hell, for he would send you there.
Remember but his face and when you threaten
Choose first an arrow that will not rebound.

MALART, *retreating*

Enough. Farewell. I look upon you once
And see you thus. And then—no more again
Shall such a face look on the world or me.

Exit into Fulbert's house. Heloise looks at his retreating figure until he has gone. She then goes swiftly toward the school steps and stands upon them, looking in. After a moment Abelard appears and comes down to her.

ABELARD

All's well. They are asleep.

They both come down the steps to the middle of the court.

HELOISE

But I have had
A dreadful visitor.

ABELARD

Who?

HELOISE

Malart.

ABELARD

Ah, he'll guard us.

HELOISE

Not with clear eyes or untouched judgment ever.

She pauses.

I am too much disquieted to stay.

We must return, that such eyes may no longer
Seek to destroy us by such vigilance.

ABELARD

This very ground opposes coming day.

The legions of the dew array their spears
To fight until the upward-marching sun
Dispels their watery camp——

HELOISE, *starting wildly*

What's that? A sound!

A slight noise is heard in Fulbert's house.

ABELARD, *still dreamily*

All earth and heaven should sound our gladness out.

A louder noise is heard.

HELOISE

That is not heaven nor earth, but hell awakened

Quick! To your door! Good-night!

She runs to Abelard, they embrace hurriedly.

ABELARD

Ah, World!

HELOISE

Quick!

Abelard runs to the school door, Heloise to her own. The doors, which they had left open upon entering are now shut. They try to enter but cannot.

ABELARD

Locked!

HELOISE, *shaking frantically at her own door to no avail*

The doors are sealed!

She leaves it and runs along the walls reaching blindly with her hands as though to tear an opening.

Through the stones—creep—creep.
Flatten against them there in the deep shadow—
They shall not find you—you will die—are dead—
Whispers have reached him—murder was in his face
While we stood yesterday before the world—
O God, can you not leap?

She runs toward the court gate, and in doing so she nears Abelard, who has stood still, silently watching her as though he dreamed. As she darts past him he catches her passionately in his arms.

ABELARD

Here will we bide,
There is no other way.

HELOISE, *struggling to be released*

The gate! The gate!

ABELARD

Do we not know that ever at night 'tis locked?

HELOISE, *freeing herself from his embrace and running to the gate, she drags at it with all her strength.*

It moves!

The gate seems to yield an inch. The sounds in Fulbert's house increase. Fulbert's voice is heard shouting for lights. The key is heard fumbling in the door of his house. Bolts are withdrawn. Abelard stands watching Heloise, seemingly stupefied. Then he darts forward

and they throw their united strength against the gate. It opens a little space and they hurry through into the street, just before Malart rushes in from Fulbert's house closely followed by Fulbert.

MALART

Behold!

They both look about and find the court empty.

FULBERT

Lies! Lies! O damnèd——

He turns upon Malart and seizes him by the throat, dragging at his knife. In their struggle, however, they have neared the gate and suddenly the priest, with a triumphant, choking shout, draws Fulbert nearer and points to the gate, on the lock of which there hangs a fallen white drapery of Heloise. Malart plucks it off, points meaningly to the open doorway and gives the drapery to Fulbert.

FULBERT, *staring at it*

Hers!

Curtain.

ACT II

A fortnight later. A large and sombre room in Fulbert's villa at Corbeil. On either side of the room is a door, and at the back is a large double doorway hung with an arras of tapestry.

Enter Luce from one side. She seats herself and begins reading a book which she has brought. Enter to her soon after from a door on the opposite side, Heloise. She pauses after taking a few steps and seems to listen nervously.

HELOISE

What sound was that?

LUCE

Where?

HELOISE

Here.

LUCE

Why, I heard nothing.

HELOISE, *as though to herself*

What can it be?

She walks about the room, staring around her abstractedly. Luce follows her with her eyes.

LUCE

The house is very still.

HELOISE

No, something has been clamorous all about,
All these two weeks.

LUCE

It is the din of Paris
Still beating in your ears.

HELOISE

Not that.

LUCE

What then?

HELOISE

Oh, I hear silence till the very air
Shrieks out my sick anxiety.

LUCE

Then why
Did you put leagues between him and your longing?

HELOISE

A longer staying was the very tune
The tongues would play on.

LUCE, *sighing*

It is weary waiting.
Time's in a swoon.

HELOISE, *still moving restlessly about*

The rooms are feverous.

She suddenly stops, still listening intently.

What's that?

LUCE, *also listening*

A door.

HELOISE, *again beginning her restless walk about the room*

The very doors are restless,

The ceilings all impend with dreadful fears.

The floor's a sea. The walls alone are quiet.

LUCE, *rising and going to her lovingly*

This climbing, baffled longing leads to sickness.

HELOISE, *looking at her*

Are my eyes altered from my eyes that night?

LUCE

No.

HELOISE

Then I am not ill.

Suddenly starting.

There, some one's here.

Ah.

Her face lightens.

LUCE, *going to an open window at the back and leaning far out*

No, your uncle's guests from Paris come.

HELOISE

Who else?

LUCE, *half turning from where she still stands by the window*

None, now they enter there below.

HELOISE, *with a gesture of weariness*

So I must be reluctant hostess then
And don my mask of eager welcoming.

LUCE, *running to her*

No, no. Stay; go within—I'll welcome them.

*She tries to lead Heloise from the room.*HELOISE, *putting her off*

It is the only fitness. I have been
His household's mistress and they know no other.

LUCE

I beg of you.

HELOISE, *looking at her*

Why?

LUCE, *evading her gaze*

Oh, never ask.

Sounds are heard as of people approaching the room.

HELOISE

They come!

Enter guests. They are gorgeously apparelled, ladies and gentlemen with their servants. They enter slowly with great ceremony, and upon seeing Heloise they halt and stand silent, regarding her with haughty disdain. The foremost of them is an imposing-looking woman who carries a long staff.

Friends of this house, greeting most deep to all.
Welcome to comfort and my uncle's bounty.

The guests draw themselves slightly apart from her.

THE FOREMOST WOMAN, *looking sneeringly at Heloise*

Our host, your uncle, follows in an hour.
He bids us be apportioned to our chambers.
On his arrival he will welcome us.

HELOISE, *stonily*

The steward will assign you to your halls.

The guests slowly and insolently pass through and exeunt by the opposite doorway.

LUCE, *stamping with rage as they go*

Cats, and poor drooping hounds!

As they slowly go out the last guest turns and comes forward, showing himself to be Malart.

MALART, *raising his lean arms*

Peace to this house.

HELOISE, *rushing toward him*

Oh, he tamed these fingers from such usage
Or you'd see something savager in me
Than you've yet looked on, and 'twould be the last
Sight in those rolling eyes!

MALART, *calmly*

What cause for anger?

HELOISE

Think what you've done to his most snowy fame
That like a tower rose above the world,
And never ask again.

MALART, *imperturbably*

Yet I do ask it.

HELOISE

You led the embattled filthy tongues of Paris
To smear their sooty malice over it.

MALART

A tower never fell by such assault
That was not opened to attack by one
Within the walls.

HELOISE, *madly*

Then Devil, name the traitor.

MALART, *with sudden fierceness*

You!

HELOISE, *aghast*

I?

MALART

Who else? You two alone were tenants,
And you had stolen in where he alone
Climbed on a narrow stair to his own place.
The tower that he raised will not contain
Two; it is too slender. He builds it so;
Builds for himself alone, the lonelier tower
Will pierce the higher sky.

HELOISE, *musng sadly*

A narrow stair——

MALART, *coming nearer to her*

I once conjured you by his soul's salvation,
I now conjure you by his own desires;
Take from between them and his eyes your shadow
For these are his desires which he evades,
Looks sidelong at, but never yet was blind to.
Though in the devious net of your mad wishes
You halt his feet.

He stops. Heloise stands stricken with conviction. Malart then proceeds with a more careless manner.

Yet I bring news for you.

HELOISE

Then 'tis new sorrow, let me hear its name.

MALART

He has left Paris.

HELOISE

Gone! Ah, where?

MALART

He vanished

After one day had shone upon your absence.

HELOISE

Where? Where?

MALART, *coldly*

I was not made his confidant.

HELOISE

But my departure made his path all safe
By famishing all tongues from further food.

MALART

Their former food will last, they've plenteous store.

HELOISE

How shall I starve them?

MALART, *turning upon her suddenly*

Starve them! Starve Desire!

For that's assurance of their further food.

HELOISE, *grasping at a hope*

He needed rest. He's gone to follow it.
And I'll be glad.

MALART, *returning to her*

The school is all seditious.

HELOISE, *starting*

The school!

MALART

It breaks. His name begins a riot.
Student kills student for him and against.

HELOISE, *piteously*

What further news?

MALART

No more.

HELOISE, *turning away*

It is enough.

A bell sounds in the house.

MALART

God's voice now calls me to my prayers. I go.

LUCE, *approaching him*

With Him upon your side, wearing your colors,
Who shall prevail against you?

MALART, *solemnly accepting her mockery*

Not this world.

LUCE

I would my strength could make this world a better
By sending you post-haste into a worse.

Exit Malart, unheeding.

HELOISE

And this from me——

LUCE, *coming to her*

What?

HELOISE

Oh, I am the cause,
I'm the cursed reason of this dread result.
The school—his very heart—the very ladder
Of his ascent, is being overturned,
And I, the slippery stone from which it falls.

LUCE

You! You are his safest battlement and strength.

HELOISE, *sadly*

Not in the world's eyes and by them he climbed.

LUCE

They're the uncertain ground he slips upon.
Not you.

HELOISE

Yes I, the world is jealous of me.
He is the world's.

LUCE

You are his secret strength.

HELOISE

Secret! Yes that's the word. Only in shadow
I must remain, for when I do emerge,
The imperious world, his mistress, watching him
Sees the division of his eyes and flaunts him.

LUCE, *sighing*

Time's the magician that will smoothe it all.

Half to herself.

Though what a snail he is.

HELOISE, *staring at Luce's hand*

What's that you wear?

Going closer to her.

A ring! O Luce! And on a telltale finger!

LUCE, *hiding her hand confusedly*

I could not keep it off.

HELOISE

Out with the secret.

Who?

LUCE, *in a low voice*

Gervase.

HELOISE

Wedded?

LUCE

On the night we left.

HELOISE, *embracing her*

Luce, Luce, you left him, followed me, and I
Fed with self pity, mourned, while you without
Stood waiting—waiting him.

She turns away.

Oh, shall I never
Pluck out this selfish root that winds about me?

LUCE, *going to her*

My Love and I are safe, our battle's won.
No evil fortune 'ever envied us,
So now our weapons are all bright for you.

HELOISE

What sacrifice you laid upon my altar!

LUCE, *soothingly*

Only a little waiting.

HELOISE

But your fears?

LUCE

For whom?

HELOISE

Gervase.

LUCE, *smiling*

That boy is always safe.
Trust him. If all the rays of stars were spears
He'd glitter at them till their aim was blinded.

HELOISE

How shall we thank you both?

LUCE

By winning like us.

*She looks meaningly at Heloise, who first looks away sadly
and then turns and impulsively kisses her.*

HELOISE

A wife! O sweet, I love you doubly now.

LUCE

You'll find a double tenderness in me
By the same means before this moon fades out,
Touching her ring and taking Heloise's hand.
This girdle shall be mirrored on this hand.

HELOISE

The moon might bring it if the earth were gone,
But while this world is real it denies me,
For it holds other jewels up to him
That far outshine this humble, quiet thing.

Looking at the ring.

LUCE

But with the others, he may long to wear
This also——

HELOISE

He would never be the wearer;

She looks at her hand.

Only this selfish hand would be so crowned.

She draws Luce to her.

But ah this heart of his flows out to you!

LUCE

Love me and wait. Let's go now to our chamber.

HELOISE, *going*

Yes.

LUCE

And I'll follow soon. I'll bring the books.

Exit Heloise. Luce goes to a table and begins gathering an armful of books. As she does so, Gervase stealthily and theatrically puts his head in at the doorway at the back of the room.

GERVASE

Hist!

LUCE, *turning, seeing him and throwing both arms wide*
for him

Here!

Gervase is magnificently clothed in most glittering and joppish garments. Luce holds him off and surveys him.

You thing of pearl, what cloud rained you?

GERVASE, *ecstatically*

Inimitable vision, look again.

He struts about.

I'm gold, not that sweet bauble oysters wear

Unless——

Approaching her quizzically.

You are that fish, for I'm your gem.

Suddenly starting with mock horror.

Are you an oyster? Why, now I look closely,

I see the likeness.

He examines her.

And your lips are shut.

Then I'm the heron that shall woo you out.

Here I come wading.

He affects to wade slowly toward her till he is near, then suddenly he clasps her and takes a kiss.

LUCE

Madcap, where is he?

GERVASE

Ask of the sun. I cannot look upon him;

He is too high. And yet I think he floats

Somewhere about a mile above this place.

LUCE, *joyfully*

He comes?

GERVASE

He sinks to us.

LUCE

And to what end?

GERVASE

To take that sweet star that lies fallen here
Back in the sky with him.

LUCE, *clasping her hands*

Oh, now all's well!

GERVASE

And greater things than these are yet to tell.
First, look at me!

He spins about.

I cost a thousand francs!

LUCE, *smiling*

A sorry bargain——

She stops suddenly, listening.

Hush, she comes—go back.

He retreats.

I'll tell her softly.

GERVASE, *running to her*

A kiss!

LUCE, *kissing him hastily*

There—hide yourself.

Exit Gervase by doorway at back. Enter Heloise by side door.

HELOISE

Sweet, I waited, but the room was lonely.

LUCE

Wait here.

She goes to Heloise.

A sudden question stirs within me;
You said awhile ago that you must bide
Deep in the shadow and be only near him
In secrecy.

She waits.

HELOISE, *slowly*

It grows more true each hour.

LUCE

Then let me ask, if he should come—this hour,

Heloise moves.

Denying need of secrecy or shadow,
Would you not walk forth with him in the sun?

HELOISE

You dream my dreams for me.

LUCE

But would you go?

HELOISE

First I must know whether he wished the sun
Merely to smile upon us and be glad,
Or whether he aspired to possess
The very sun itself.

LUCE

You do not mean
That you have thoughts of now renouncing him!

HELOISE, *desperately*

Oh, never that; I will not—could not think it!
What black necessity could bring such death?

LUCE, *wonderingly*

What then?

HELOISE, *slowly*

My fate may force me to deny
My wifehood's crown and name before the world.

Approaching Luce.

Now hate me, scorn me as all women would.

LUCE

Oh, marriages by priests are never made!
But surely being woman, you prefer
The quietude and bright security
Within the confines of the Church's blessing.

HELOISE

Oh, I am homesick for that tender land,
For only in that climate may there flourish
Those rarer and more delicate, finer flowers
That Love is gardener of: for all outside
Is but a wide, assaulted sea. And yet——

She broods.

Even the sea has colors, and deep down
Sea flowers are, and some seem even quiet.

LUCE, *looking at her sadly*

The quiet of the drowned.

HELOISE, *putting her hand on Luce's lips*

Please, please.

LUCE

But vows—the ring—would be the bonds to hold
him.

HELOISE

Ah, for the moment of a little year
It would be light beyond the sky of stars;
And then his path would lead his eyes again
On to some higher sky, and I should be
Only the fetter, weary with self-hate
Because I held him.

LUCE

Love should have more trust.

HELOISE

I'll trust him to my love, and trust my love
To him that neither may be dashed to ruin.

LUCE

I think he changes and grows less desirous
Of that elusive candle of his fame.

HELOISE

Oh, it may be—oh, may it not be, Luce?
May time not work some sorcery for me?
May not the jealous world remould his vision;
Turn his ambition's gaze to other heights—
Not lower, but more tolerant of me?

She turns away.

I'll cling to that. I'll watch his eyes for hope
When next I see him. Oh, I'll always watch.

*She suddenly starts, listening, takes one eager step toward
the door at back, then stops.*

LUCE

Then begin now, for there's a step you know.

Enter Abelard.

HELOISE, *wildly*

Abelard! Oh, your life is not safe here!

*Gervase appears in doorway at back. He beckons to Luce,
who goes to him and they disappear.*

ABELARD

Where else can be my life save where you are?

*He withdraws from her embrace and stands before her.
He wears the trappings of a nobleman.*

But I am safe and come to tell you why,
To tell you and to claim you mine—mine only.
My father's dead and I am peer of France.
And before all men you shall soon be hailed
Countess of Berenger.

HELOISE

*She has been listening eagerly, but as he ends, her head
sinks, a pause ensues, and then she speaks in a low voice.*

And then—what then?

ABELARD, *astounded*

Why, is it not enough? We two shall flee
Far from this rotten and calumnious world
And in long quiet rule my southern hills.

HELOISE

And then?

ABELARD

These are strange *thens* from a chosen bride!
What else but find forgetting in each other?

HELOISE, *looking long at him*

Am I a cup of Lethe for your lips?

ABELARD, *loudly*

You shall be by the love that lifts it to me.

HELOISE

Ah, I am not that dark river itself
With inexhaustible fountains welling always.

ABELARD

But you shall be to me.

HELOISE

I pray not so.
Is there, dear love, no other happiness
Than to forget?

ABELARD

What dear thing could be dearer
Going to her more tenderly and looking closely into her eyes.
Than in these purple deeps to sink and drown?

HELOISE

What of the school, my Abelard?

ABELARD, *starting*

The school!

Moving away.

That broken ladder that I climbed upon——

HELOISE

To what?

ABELARD

To what?

Musing.

Who knows? It might have been——

With a sigh he returns to her.

That sky is past now over the world's edge
And you are my new morning.

HELOISE

But the school?

ABELARD, *gloomily*

I shall no more return to that ascent.
Our path's together——

HELOISE

Even though it leads you
Downwards?

ABELARD, *vigorously*

I care not, I have lost ambition.

HELOISE, *going to him*

Oh, look at me and let me hear you say it.

ABELARD

Once I have said it, once is all enough.

HELOISE

Would you in that far province be content
And never wake, and turn and look at me,
Remembering?

ABELARD, *avoiding her gaze*

I would steep me in your soul
To deep, to poppied quiet.

HELOISE, *moving away*

Poppy flowers
Never would lull you to forgetfulness
Of those relinquished and those radiant blooms
That once you might have gathered.

ABELARD, *following her impatiently*

These are words.
Why do we use them? Here behold me flown
Quickly to spread before you for your treading
My new-won cloth of gold; to share with you
My latest dignity.

HELOISE

But if this latest
Should, by my blind acceptance, be the last?

ABELARD, *astonished*

Would you have more than this?

HELOISE

Ah, sweet,
The world holds more than this bright prize for you
That shines so large for being seen so near.

She suddenly goes to him.

Oh, does it not? Tell me how bright it seems.

ABELARD

I never wanted this false world's applause.

HELOISE

Never?

ABELARD

I dreamed of it, but now's the waking.

HELOISE

But other wakings upon other dawns—
Must they not come?

ABELARD, *looking at her coldly*

Your ways grow strange to me.

HELOISE

O Tenderest, O Best, forgive these ways,
For I do know this heaven you offer me,
This deep bewildering path of asphodel——

She pauses.

And yet all very clear and gently simple—
All white—all plain. Oh, does it not seem so?

ABELARD

No other path is plain; no other open.

HELOISE

Know first, whatever chances, that I thank you
For this most mighty honor, this great crown
That you would set upon this yearning brow.

ABELARD

Would set and shall set.

HELOISE

Is it not enough
That you have offered it? I shall remember,
And that white memory shall crown me always.

ABELARD

You shall not need your memories, we shall make
Each hour more real.

HELOISE

Will any be more real
Than the old hours within our shadefast quiet
Before the world broke in?

ABELARD

Ah, now I see!
You fear the world!

HELOISE, *sighing a negation*

Ah!

ABELARD, *following his clew*

Then some one——

He ponders, then brightens.

Your uncle!

This faintness, this indifference to me
Are the sick maskings of a mind afraid.

But now be soothed; I bring his purchase price;

Calling attention to his dress.

This pettiness of my new worldly station.

HELOISE, *gazing at him*

Does this new station seem already petty?

ABELARD, *morosely*

It grows more stagnant, small, monotonous

Each hour——

He suddenly brightens as though casting off his mood.

But happiness is just beyond!

HELOISE

Beyond?

ABELARD

You hold it for me, you shall give it
When we are forged and welded into one.

Heloise moves dumbly toward the door.

Where now?

HELOISE

Dear Love, I go to be a while
Alone. I'll send one with your chamber's key.

ABELARD, following her toward the door

What's this? I cannot fathom you; that now
On my return, all flame, into your arms,
You damp my ardor, coldly turn away.

*HELOISE, suddenly turning and throwing her arms about
him*

Oh, do you love me?

ABELARD

Yes.

HELOISE, releasing herself after a pause

It is enough.

She goes to door at side.

I shall return, perhaps with better fire.

Exit Heloise.

*Abelard stands looking after her gloomily for a moment, a
servant appears at doorway, back, bearing keys, to conduct
Abelard to his rooms. Abelard sees him and finally with
an impatient gesture turns to go with him. As he
reaches the doorway, back, he is confronted by Malart
returning.*

MALART, after a pause

I find you in strange places, Master mine.

ABELARD, *sternly*

And I suspect you of still stranger things.
Why are you here?

MALART, *imperturbably*

And you?

ABELARD

I'll not brook questions.

MALART

You wear a coronet now, I have heard.

ABELARD

An honorable one.

MALART

And it can aid you
To greater place than ever could have crowned you
From your old humbler station.

ABELARD, *avoiding his direct gaze*

It may be.

MALART, *coming closer*

And yet you bring it here.

ABELARD, *recovering his bearing*

Why not?

MALART

For what?

ABELARD

You asked the question; you can answer it.

MALART, *after a long look at him*

Brother, the holy synod has convened.

ABELARD

So it has done before.

MALART

Never so wisely,

For they discuss and favor an alliance

Between the University and Rome!

ABELARD, *starting*

At last! So then I've won that next high step!

Now with the Church's treasury and power——

He muses.

MALART

Why, then, do you wait here?

ABELARD, *looking up*

Ah, here's the place

Better than any, when good news arise,

Here I can share them!

MALART

Share them, in what way?

ABELARD

In every way that blessing makes secure.

MALART, *following him about*

Then rouse your sleeping memory.

ABELARD, *stopping*

Memory?

MALART

You know the Church's and all Europe's law;
Masters and tutors of the fledgling youth
Shall be and must be ever celibate!

ABELARD, *with sudden desperation*

So this is what you do; you bring a cup
Perfect to appease my thirsty longing,
And then, when it brims, glowing against my lips,
Shatter it!

MALART, *quietly*

No, the cup is perfect yet.

ABELARD, *walking excitedly about*

Never, now, never shall it quench me.

MALART, *going to him*

Why?

ABELARD

You seek to hear what you already know.

MALART

You still hold now your former mad intent?

ABELARD, *halting*

Though it should lead me to the tottering verge
Of tideless death and past it, I will follow.
For in her eyes there is a better thing;
I've seen it—and upon an instant breathed
Airs out of Paradise——

He pauses.

though the place itself

No longer is.

MALART

And you would lose the world
For the poor sake of that one instant's breath?

ABELARD, *fixedly*

When on the altar our fierce double fires
Are woven into one, I then shall live
Within that odorous and that golden air
Always!

MALART, *sneeringly*

You speak of altars easily.

ABELARD

There's not a church in France will not unite us.

MALART, *approaching him*

Against her will?

ABELARD

What vacant words are these?

MALART

She'll never fold her wings to fit that nest;
She knows of wilder and more easy skies.

ABELARD

Then you know little of the love she holds.

MALART

I never doubted her desire of you.

ABELARD, *looking long at him*

Speak the lame thing that halts behind your eyes.

MALART, *with assumed carelessness*

No need. She has herself begun to speak.

ABELARD, *impatiently turning away*

Why do I listen to this emptiness?

MALART, *stopping him*

One further word.

ABELARD

Of what?

MALART

I seek for knowledge.

Be tribunal for me who am a priest:
When woman shall deny her womanhood
What shall be said of her?

ABELARD *wonderingly*

Deny?

MALART

When she,
Offered a table spread with hallowedness,
Declines, forsakes, rejects it and returns
To honied husks and fleshpots she has known
Outside the all too sternly bitter law,
When being offered honorable veils
She turns a wilful, bold, and naked face
By wild refusal of the name of wife?

ABELARD, *seizing him*

Malart, you dog! What intimation's this?

MALART, *with affected simplicity*

None, I have none in mind, but only seek
For a wise judgment upon such a woman.

ABELARD

Be carefuller of your life, you gnaw upon me
Like a blind querulous worm. Why do you ask this?

MALART

Only to know of womankind from one
Who knows them well.

ABELARD, *flinging him off toward the door*

I would be rid of you.

MALART, *standing by doorway*

First, judgment on the case of my supposing——

ABELARD

A vain supposing——

MALART

There are many women——

ABELARD

None would be such a wanton and a fool.

MALART, *starting triumphantly*

So! I have found firm rock in you at last!

Enter Heloise by door at side. She is paler and more listless than before.

Now let this entering sea wear it away!

Exit Malart.

ABELARD

The sea! He named you so—are you indeed
That soft insistent deep that breaks upon me,
Wearing my granite-like conviction down?

HELOISE

I would not be so.

ABELARD

Then forget those words
That late you uttered.

HELOISE

What words do you mean?

ABELARD

Hesitant, weak, evasive—all unfit
To match that radiance that we two have known.

HELOISE, *painfully*

O Love, I would not seem to you so poor,
So lacking.

ABELARD

Is it so? Then speak again.
Efface those former words by better ones.

HELOISE

What shall I speak of?

ABELARD

If you love me, show it.

HELOISE, *in a low voice*

By words?

ABELARD

There is a time when words are needed.

HELOISE, *listlessly*

What would you have me say?

ABELARD

What heavy strangeness
Is this, that you, who were the very voice
And instrument that made Love musical,
Are dumb?

HELOISE

I'll speak then of whatever thing
You wish of me.

ABELARD

Of! "Of" is not enough!
What is the word and *how* the thing is said.

HELOISE

What shall it be?

ABELARD, *impatiently*

Do you no longer love me?

HELOISE, *in a monotone*

I love you.

ABELARD, *pondering a moment*

That seems now no longer
To be enough. Give me your eager answer
To bear that joy that I would share with you
As I have sought.

HELOISE, *suddenly going to him and putting her hands on
his shoulders*

Oh, ask me once again. . . .

ABELARD, *not meeting her gaze*

What shall I ask?

HELOISE

What you desire of me.

ABELARD

How! Are you deaf?

HELOISE, *as to herself*

Oh, I am listening.

ABELARD

I only seek to have you follow me.

HELOISE, *still watching him*

And you?

ABELARD

Away with thoughts and cares of me!

For I have pulled the unselfish flower of love,
And see how brighter than all laurels are
The petals of it.

HELOISE, *steadily, after gazing long at him*

I'll follow you while I am Heloise
And you the Abelard that desires it so.

ABELARD

Why, this is all I sought.

He moves away and then turns back to her.

We'll go at once

To Paris.

HELOISE

Oh, not there!

ABELARD

And why?

HELOISE

Not yet;

Until that storm subsides.

ABELARD

We are the powers

Shall clear that sky.

HELOISE

How?

ABELARD

By our joined hands.

There by the altar's potent sacrament

This tempest of foul tongues will all be stilled.

HELOISE, *with a mighty effort*

Not to that altar can I ever come.

ABELARD, *taking several steps backward and surveying her
dumfounded*

Your soul veers ever like a windy flame;

This moment fledged your glad consent to follow,

And now you pierce it with this strange denial!

HELOISE, *looking away from him*

I did consent to go where you may lead
While you may wish it.

ABELARD

What!

He instinctively shrinks away from her.

O hellish thought!

You would put off that white and holy veil
To cling to nakedness?

HELOISE

I'll still be clothed
In secret robes and many hidden veils.

She pauses and then speaks brokenly.

I pray you wait and—you shall see me wear them.

ABELARD, *lifting his hands above his head*

This makes the sky itself a brazen thing.

HELOISE

I pray you, do not think of me, but turn
Your eyes upon yourself in this wild hour.
All this large world is yours and you the world's
Knitted and welded in joint ownership.
I am but one of all your wide possessions.

ABELARD, *staring at her*

By some damned echo his prophecy has brought
This spell upon you. Waken! Shake it off!

HELOISE

This day for the first time I have awakened
And shall not sleep again.

ABELARD, *after considering for a time*

Evil like this

Also should waken me, and yet I find
My dream-like flame leans to you still unquenched.

HELOISE

May we not strive now to forget this hour?

ABELARD

Only by changing can it be effaced.

HELOISE

I—cannot—change. But you—perchance—it may
be—

Afterwards—on a day—may we not see
Even our way to that same altar at last?

ABELARD

But even now that way is easiest.

HELOISE, *quickly*

Yes.

ABELARD

Then recall that insane sudden urge
To journey on the impassable thorny road,
When this fair garden is accessible.

HELOISE

Are there no other gardens?

ABELARD

 If there are,
Only together can we win their fruits.

HELOISE

What is that fruitage?

ABELARD

 All that this good world
Can give!

HELOISE

Even now you did despise that world.

ABELARD

So to compare it with my need of you.

HELOISE

O Love, the way is easy only here.
Pray let me be a roadside well for you
That you shall find and find again wherever
The path shall lead you and your thirst shall be.

Drink then of me and be refreshed and quickened.
But never let me be the sleeping draught
The altar would distil of me for you.

ABELARD

A deeper evil than these words you speak
Could never come from woman.

HELOISE

Pray be kinder.

ABELARD

I would have been content in such a bondage.
You could have made it sweet.

HELOISE

Is bondage ever?

Cords of fine silk and fetters of soft gold
In time will gall.

ABELARD

Why do I stand here so,
And hear alluring vileness painted so,
Who am already compassed in a net?

He goes desperately about the room.

But I will tear it—I'll be rid of it.
And you, the wearer——

HELOISE, *wildly*

Abelard!

ABELARD, *more calmly*

No, not that.

Musing half to himself.

'Tis not so easy even now. I'll not
Give pain to you who pour so much upon me.
But what's the way?

Heloise suddenly starts toward the doorway at back, a noise is heard without and Fulbert appears at the door in traveling costume with his men behind.

FULBERT

Ha! here's my rat at last!

Trapped at the bait!

He walks around Abelard with ferocious deliberation, then halts and shouts to his men.

Bring irons, ho!

HELOISE

Hold and listen!

He is not now the man you took him for.

FULBERT

Off, desperate fool, I know him but too well.

HELOISE

He has a place at the King's council—

FULBERT

What!

HELOISE

—being Lord of Berenger!

FULBERT

By what new coil?

HELOISE

No coil indeed, but death. His father's heir
Wears his descended cloak.

FULBERT, *meaningly*

I thought his father
Would have outlived him; but that makes no less
His damned offence.

ABELARD

I have come here to whiten
Those black offendings by my proffered hand——

HELOISE, *starting between them*

No—no——

ABELARD

in honorable marriage to her.

HELOISE

No——

FULBERT, *turning upon her*
Peace.

To Abelard.

So! Is it so?

Pondering deeply.

de Berenger—

Here is a way to patch up broken hopes.

Again to Abelard.

What can you offer?

ABELARD

I have said, my hand.

Heloise dumbly tries to prevent his speaking.

FULBERT, *sneeringly*

What does the hand hold, that is now the mark?
What lands? What coffers? Are you fat or lean?
Marred though she is I hold her at great figures.

ABELARD, *haughtily*

My secretary in the servants' hall
Is keeper of my books. He'll broke with brokers.

FULBERT, *wrapped in his new scheme*

So? I'll go see. The thing may be arranged.
I'll price you. I will weigh you, and perchance
This sorry barter can be well exchanged.

Exit Fulbert, muttering to himself.

ABELARD

Now it must be. He's set upon this track.
There can be no retreating now for you.

HELOISE, *half to herself*

What path? Oh, I am dazed in a web.
Danger was in my silence, danger in speech.

ABELARD

Do you remain in that most damned denial
Of both our better selves?

HELOISE

I must not change.

ABELARD, *leaving her*

What can it mean? No other human woman
Would hold unalterably to such foul madness.

He suddenly stops.

Ah, can it come from too great weight of learning?

He goes to her.

Books, books have woven all this wrong around you.
Terrible crimes of old, dead evil tales,
Wild bloody griefs and agonies unnamed
Have crept into your blood, and there envenomed
Your maiden judgment.

HELOISE

The thing I mean to do
Was never on a written page set down.

ABELARD

Surely this cloud upon your brain will pass,
But while it stays, some danger threatens us.

He looks about him.

Your uncle is jaundiced with the yellow of gold,
And swollen monstrous to a thing of dread.

HELOISE

While you remain, I'll shield you from his hand.

ABELARD, *still looking about and shuddering*

Vague fear surrounds me. We must leave this
house.

This air is rotten, dank, detestable.
Its glooms have poisoned you from purity.
Go to Argenteuil where your childhood was.
Its flowers will woo you back to innocence.

HELOISE

Without you? No.

ABELARD

Unless you go at once
I'll never follow.

HELOISE

But if I do go
When will you come to me?

ABELARD

When I have gone
First to Paris where great business calls me.
We must not stay, but in an hour go.
I will have horses hidden in the orchard
And ride with you until our paths diverge.
He turns from her suddenly, overtaken by his former mood.
Oh, damnable hour that life should bring me this!
I seem to be attainted with your madness.
I'll go and think.

He moves toward the door and speaks half musingly as he goes.

Think what? And how escape?

Exit Abelard.

Heloise stands white and tottering for a moment and then calls Luce. Enter Luce.

HELOISE

Now make me ready for a journey, Sweet,
For I am going.

LUCE, *joyfully*

Ah, you've seen at last
The better, easier way.

HELOISE

Better—perhaps——

LUCE, *looking at her*

You chose the other! Why?

HELOISE, *turning away*

Do you remember

Sad Lucan singing in his battle cry
Of how on Lesbos once the white Cornelia,
Receiving message of her husband's death,
Whom she by marriage had brought evil on,
Mourned to the phantom of her loved one's face,
While his gray awful manes came all about
And watched her keep a dagger in her hand
While she died on it? Oh, the dagger first,
She should have used it first before she wedded.

LUCE, *clasping her*

Rest here a little.

HELOISE, *loosing herself*

I must haste. And now
I'll say farewell and send you to your love.

LUCE

I'll never leave you.

HELOISE, *putting her off sadly*

Take a double blessing;
My portion that I put away from me
Take for your own and have in double store.

She kisses Luce's brow.

The blessing of deep peace now take from me.
Safety's a blessing, then receive that too.
The joy of going forth into the day
Untaunted by the world, that too I give you.

LUCE

The path you choose will cause you to deny
Thousands of joys like these——

HELOISE, *continuing as unhearing*

And you shall see
Young faces round your hearth.

Her head sinks.

LUCE

O Piteous Heart——

HELOISE

This I, who shall not see them, give to you.

LUCE

But what shall you have left?

HELOISE

Ah, him I have——

She pauses. Then kisses Luce.

Go, then, and gather my few jewels up,
For I must bring him all the dower I have.

*Luce moves sadly toward the door.*HELOISE, *calling*

Luce.

Luce returns to her.

Once more—the ring.

LUCE, *wonderingly*

What ring?

Heloise looks at Luce's hand.

You mean——?

HELOISE

This one; I'll only look at it once more.

She examines it.

It seems a little thing. Ah, never fear,
I will not put it on.

She gives it back.

And now prepare me.

*Luce moves toward the door, Heloise follows her, but sounds
are heard without and they stop, listening. The noise
grows and resolves itself into the sound of Fulbert's voice*

and of people approaching. Enter Fulbert by doorway at back. He is beckoning and calling to his guests and household who follow him, entering the room and arranging themselves en masse at one side. They stare at Heloise opposite them with sneers and insolent bearing.

FULBERT

Ho all!

Heloise starts to go. Fulbert detains her.

Stay here.

To servants.

Summon the rest to me.

Exeunt servants, who, while he is speaking, enter with other guests. He mutters to himself while the guests are arranging themselves.

'Twill pass—far richer than I thought—safe profits

Looking up.

Here's news for you and I'll be Fortune's herald;
A fortunate marriage; a great marriage made!

A stir among the guests.

My niece! Ah—so you thought her virginal!

The guests look meaningly at each other.

We've kept it dark, great holdings were involved—
Deeds must be signed, agreements ratified.
But now all's fixed. Greet her and joy with her,
The Lady Heloise de Berenger,

By God's and Peter's Church's sanctioning
The consort of Count Pierre called Abelard,
Master of treasures in rich Bretagne.

During this speech Heloise has first made a frantic gesture as though to prevent her uncle's words; but as he proceeds she seems to calm herself and stands looking straight before her. As her uncle ceases there is a pause, during which he looks triumphantly at his surprised and crest-fallen guests. Heloise steps forward with deliberation and begins to speak.

HELOISE

Uncle, your rashness has discharged a bolt
Straight up against the inexorable air,
And such must fall upon the sender's head.
I would have spared you this last public wound
Who have brought upon you so much private grief
Unwillingly. Yet I must speak at last.
If this announcement I have heard be truth,
Then that bright truth whose face reflects my heart
Has swum into a black eclipse from you.
If this be truth and you are all awake,
Then I am sleeping and speak this in sleep.
If truth's alive and you have heard his voice,
Then I am dead and you behold my phantom.

Fulbert moves to prevent her, but she goes on.

But truth's alive and I'm alive and waking,

As to herself.

Though I may hear my voice as in a dream.

The guests look at each other with malignant satisfaction.

Listen and know I am awake. I hear
Whispers about me, little buzzing stings,
I see the skirt withdrawn, the eyes that pass me,
And smiles that arc too slant to make me glad.
Then hear that what my uncle says is false.
Hear how my voice cries false into your ears,
Let them remember how it thundered "False!"
And let them echo always "False, False!"——

FULBERT, *rushing wildly forward*

What! O fool unspeakable, delirious mumming
fool!

The guests, maliciously delighted, begin to move toward door at back. Fulbert stays them.

Hold, wait! A lie—mistake—let me consider——

He muses frantically for a moment.

What hope's left. *He looks up illuminated.*

Ah! *To Heloise.*

Now nail your insane tongue
Fast to your mouth's roof and I'll save us yet.

To guests.

A small mistake—my niece would be precise—
Those little niceties of her sex's mind—
Not yet—she says—she has not quite been wedded—

The outward vows and mutterings at the altar—
Not yet, only betrothed she'd have me say.

Heloise moves. The guests appear again baffled. Fulbert again proceeds triumphantly.

And so her rich betrothal I announce,
And more; this night all here shall see the marriage!

HELOISE

A word!

FULBERT

Not one.

Enter Abelard. He halts with amazement just within the doorway.

HELOISE

It will take more than one.

She goes in front of her uncle. He tries to prevent her.

He whose high name has here and elsewhere
Been linked with mine has given me enough.
I wear a purple that no flower can yield.
He made the sun and moon my diadem.
The hours I know of are about my soul,
Like a high wall against assailing tongues.
He has been free before and shall be ever.
Free to pursue that upward path he walks
Toward that high radiance that is his ambition.

Free to be first himself, and afterwards
To be the world's and glory's—being free.
On the bright mountains of whatever star
Looks down upon his any need of me
My throne is fixed and there I'll reign for him——

*The guests with malice triumphant move toward the door
and exeunt with looks and sneers askance. Heloise
slowly goes toward doorway followed by Luce. As they
pass Abelard he speaks aside to her.*

ABELARD, *in a hurried whisper, aside to Heloise*
Mad, mad—to Argenteuil—the horses wait.

HELOISE, *pleadingly*
You, with me.

ABELARD

To the crossing road to Paris.

*Exeunt Heloise and Luce. Abelard takes a step toward
Fulbert, who is standing paralyzed by his monstrous and
impotent fury, but as he sees Fulbert's face he turns slowly
and goes out by the door opposite to that through which
Heloise passed. Fulbert is now left alone with three of
his henchmen.*

FULBERT

Lost! Sixty thousand guilders and the name!

He suddenly beckons to his three henchmen.

Approach!

He points to Abelard's retreating figure.

Mark that pale pestilence going there,
For this disease is all of his infection!

With frantic questioning.

The cure?

A HENCHMAN, *insidiously*

When a man's life is tedious to you
Then end it.

FULBERT

Faugh! That's Mercy's sedative.

He muses, then with fiendish cunning suddenly looks up.

I have it! Ah! The man—but not the life!

He draws the men closer and they whisper together.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

Three months later. The garden of the Abbey of Argenteuil. The garden is enclosed on the left by the Abbey buildings, into which there is a doorway. There is also a flight of stairs on the outside of the building leading up to a small balcony at an upper window. At the back and on the right the garden is enclosed by a stone-covered cloister, in the right corner of which is a gateway now closed. On the right is a fountain. In the foreground and surrounded by flowers is a large low sundial of white marble, about two feet high and six feet in diameter. Through the foliage of the garden can be seen here and there stone benches and small oratories. It is about two hours before noon. In the garden are the three young nuns. Cecile is kneeling at an altar set against the wall at back. Teresa is reclining against the sundial asleep. Monica is standing tensely watching something above her in the air.

MONICA

There!

CECILE, *turning*

What?

MONICA, *pointing*

Getting rainbows from the fountain
For burnishing its wings. There!

She points away.

CECILE

Monica,

You are too old to chase a butterfly.

MONICA

This is more like a waterfall or voice
Having wings. If we'd get near enough
It might have word for Lady Heloise.

CECILE, *rising and coming forward quickly*

Oh, might it? Then we'll woo it closer. Look!

MONICA

There!

CECILE

It goes up!

MONICA

High! Higher! To the window!

She points to a window on the side wall.

I'll go.

She goes up the outside stair.

CECILE

You'll meet there. It's on the sill.

MONICA, *reaching the top*

Where is it now, Cecile?

CECILE

It goes! Beyond the wall.

MONICA, *sadly*

Out to the world.

CECILE

Oh, it will come again.

Shaking Teresa, who sleepily looks up.

We'll have Teresa sit up there and watch
She likes to be so still.

She points to the upper window.

Teresa, please.

TERESA

Is the sun warmer?

MONICA

Yes.

Teresa slowly rises, goes up the stair rubbing her eyes and sits at the window after Monica descends.

MONICA, *to Cecile*

How many beads

Have you now still to tell?

CECILE, *counting*

Six—five.

MONICA

What color?

CECILE

All white.

MONICA

When Mother Gabriella comes
She'll bring you red ones.

CECILE

And for you—what gift?

MONICA

My flower seeds.

CECILE

And something for Teresa?

MONICA

A comb so she will not forget her hair.

CECILE

If Mother knew that Lady Heloise
Was here, she'd bring her——

MONICA

That for which she waits.

Slowly.

I wonder what.

CECILE

She thinks the hours are long.

MONICA

Poor lady, since she came here I have counted
And seen three separate moons come in the fountain.

CECILE

I love her dearly, and she's like the candle
I put before St. Stephen—never goes out,
But watches, watches, watches——

MONICA

Hush, she's here.

*Enter Heloise slowly from the Abbey. She comes wearily
to Monica and puts her arm about her.*

TERESA, *peering languidly from her seat at the window
above*

Sisters, a cloud is over the first wood.

Heloise starts and looks at her intensely.

MONICA

Oh, some one comes!

HELOISE

Who, Sister, can you see?

TERESA

Not yet.

MONICA

Who will it be?

CECILE

The bishop, surely.

TERESA

How fast it comes.

CECILE

Oh, never a priest then!

TERESA

It is a little cloud.

HELOISE, *to herself*

Ah, sightless guessers.

CECILE

Tell Sister Monica how the cloud is shaped.
Sometimes she tells from that. She had the dream.

TERESA, *dully*

Why, just a cloud.

CECILE

Wait, I'll go see and tell.

She runs up the stairs and looks eagerly afar from the top.

MONICA, *looking at her*

What is the cloud like, Sister?

CECILE

Like a bee

Questing along the tree-tops as for food,
And being torn by every honied chalice;
What would that mean?

MONICA, *closing her eyes*

Something of sorrow's there,
But only of the summer.

CECILE

Now it changes—
Larger—and makes a dove—and dove-colored,
But ah—poor dove——

Her face saddens.

forget how high the sky
Once was——

HELOISE, *staring before her*

Forget?

CECILE

It has a broken wing.
Tell, Sister, what is that?

MONICA

It means more woe
And more lasts all the year—'twill never heal.
What is it now?

CECILE

Oh, it grows giant now.
The dove's an eagle!

HELOISE

Soaring?

CECILE

No, droops low.
For—see—oh, it is limnèd with a chain,
A chain of steel; the eagle is of air,

The sun's upon it, and it first will melt
Before the chain will fade.

Looking down to Morica.

What would that be?

MONICA, *bewildered*

I never saw an eagle.

TERESA, *scornfully*

It was only

A changing cloud of dust.

HELOISE

Now, now, what now?

CECILE

Now it has entered on the Abbey wood,
And now emerges—now—I see——

HELOISE

His face!

CECILE, *not hearing her, but joyfully*

'Tis Mother Gabriella riding swiftly——

HELOISE, *falteringly*

Alone?

CECILE

Alone.

HELOISE

There is no word "alone!"

MONICA

What do you say, Lady?

HELOISE, *turning away*

Nothing now.

CECILE, *joyfully running down the stairs and to the garden gate followed slowly by Teresa*

She's here!

MONICA

O Blessed!

The gate is flung open and enter the Abbess, Gabriella, in travelling costume.

HELOISE

Mother!

GABRIELLA, *embracing her*

Heloise!

HELOISE

Mother, what news have you?

GABRIELLA, *turning from her to a servant, from whom she takes several packages and begins distributing them to the three young nuns*

Monica, take these.

MONICA

My seeds!

GABRIELLA, *giving package*
Teresa.

TERESA

The comb!

GABRIELLA

And here, Cecile,
Your beads.

CECILE

Oh, thank you!

MONICA

Thank you.

*They crowd about Gabriella, embracing her.*HELOISE, *gazing at Gabriella*

Mother, have you news?

GABRIELLA, *pretending to be wholly occupied by the nuns*

What worldly daughters these; now off with you.

Go do some penance for these gauds. Cecile,

Go use your beads, make them look worn and worshipful.

Monica, plant your seeds, the season's old.

Soon will sad autumn coax the rose away.

Then it's too late. Teresa, take your comb

And comb your hair. Oh, what Medusa tendrils!

I cannot tell them from the vines behind you.

Off, off, all of you!

Exeunt nuns.

HELOISE, *piteously*

All is well?

GABRIELLA, *pretending absent-mindedness*

Well——?

She turns to Heloise briskly.

Come, Heloise, and let me look at you.
O weary face, Sleep's been a stranger here.
Come, sleep.

She pulls Heloise toward the Abbey.

I, too, am tired—here's the old nest.

She draws Heloise's head upon her bosom.

HELOISE, *drawing away*

Mother, did any one send news to me?

GABRIELLA

By me? No one.

HELOISE

Did you hear any one
Say anything that I might long to hear?

GABRIELLA, *sadly*

None.

HELOISE, *after a pause*

Did you see my uncle there in Paris?

GABRIELLA, *shuddering*

Come and pour sleep upon those thirsty eyes.
Your body's like a lamp, let the flame sleep,
Or it will char you.

HELOISE

Oh, your words evade me.

She searches Gabriella's face, but the Abbess remains silent.

Then let me speak to you.

*GABRIELLA, seating herself on the sundial and pulling He-
loise down beside her*

Speak all your heart.

HELOISE, after a pause

When you were three days gone from here I came—
To wait. Since then three months of motionless
hours

Have hung here and died upward like a smoke.
Where is your hand? I wait him whom the world
Knows only night without. But first to tell you;
You know of whom I tell?

GABRIELLA, looking away

I know of him.

HELOISE

Where's the beginning? Oh, it had none first.
He was made tutor to me, he, the life
And pillar of flame to lead the darkling world,
Came to sit by me in a little chamber.
And more than he came with him. It was soon.
It came. I would have stayed it, bade it come
At least more slowly, softer, but there was
No gradual arising of the mind:

'Twas instant storm, as if the once white sky
Bloomed to a cloud that rained the flood of dreams,
And unto him all flowed as to the sea.
It was too much. I would not have it less
But for his sake. We could not keep it back.
All Paris rang. You heard?

GABRIELLA, *in a low voice*

Yes, I have heard.

HELOISE

Then you know later the windings of that path;
What I denied, what he desired of me.
Never, never would it have been best
For him. There was no other path for me,
Else I'd have found it out.

GABRIELLA

The path's not ended—

But here's the end.

She points to the Abbey and clasps Heloise to her breast.

HELOISE, *moving away*

Mother!

GABRIELLA

These walls will stand
Not always. And yet long enough to hold you
Safely until the iron but tenderest key
Turns softly in the locked wards of your life,
To give the lovingest of all releases.

HELOISE, *rising*

Ah, stones to eat.

GABRIELLA

It is indeed a stone,
But firm, unfailing and all mossy soft.
Rest, rest upon it. Let the world be closed
As a wild, dreadful book with tossing pages,
Wherein the letters tremble as a flame
About tempestuous pictures limned in tears,
Not to be finished lest the story grow
To be one's own.

HELOISE

He reads it. I will read.

GABRIELLA

The page is written and read, you cannot blot it.
Ah, stay with me—we—have our memories.

She rises and moves away.

HELOISE, *looking after her wonderingly*

You?

GABRIELLA

I—yes, I will share them with you.

HELOISE, *rising*

Mother!

GABRIELLA, *returning to Heloise*

God has not always had me for a bride.
O Heloise, this is quite wrung from me,

For it was buried deeper than it seemed
As in a well from which your thirst has drawn
All my cool covering and disclosed at last
Deep on the bottom—me—remembering,
Whom men once called Rohais de Mont-Quarrel.
The name seems rusty now.

HELOISE, *wonderingly*

But she—ah, she—
Yes, I have heard the story, loved——

GABRIELLA

The King.

HELOISE

Oh, piteous!

GABRIELLA

Ah, no, gladness, for he loved me.
But nations also have their marriages,
And when they wed, some offering must be made.
What are two lives? Yet two lives are enough.
They took him from me, but they cannot take
Something of majesty he left with me.

HELOISE

Now let me touch you and give back your pity
Who have been but a mirror to your sorrow.

She now holds Gabriella upon her own breast.

And you have offered tender cups to me,
Who should have strewn upon you buds of comfort.

GABRIELLA

The roots of comfort now no longer reach
So deep as where I lie; my blessedness
Now is that I have lost the need of them.
Only to keep the quiet that I have
Is all my prayer. And still one cup I offer;
Drink and descend with me and be at rest.

HELOISE

'Tis only mine to take what he shall give.

GABRIELLA

I would not urge, had I not to my lips
Put the same bitterness.

HELOISE

Was it the same?

GABRIELLA

I left my life.

HELOISE

Did they not take him from you?

GABRIELLA, *sadly*

I cannot reason with you.

HELOISE

O my Sweet,
Have I not known already the same grief?
The heart of yours, for it was true already
When I my beauteous marriage veil declined,
That I, for my love's sake, denied my love.

But his love I will not deny, his only
I will keep safe and battle with the world
To keep it.

GABRIELLA

Here is safety for that love.

HELOISE

It dwells where he is, and he is not here.
Where I am will be only found—a flame.

GABRIELLA

Flames must leave ashes when they die away.

HELOISE

The flame I am will never be made cool.

GABRIELLA, *watching her pityingly*

But he——?

HELOISE

He could not. His exhaustless soul
Burns with no earthy, perishable fire,
But always—as a star.

GABRIELLA

Yet stars grow pale
And hurl their cinders on the breast of earth,
Dealing out death to that which welcomes them.

HELOISE

Then on that saddest and most pitiful night
When this should happen, if it could indeed,
I would arise, having enough for both,
And gather those charred pieces all to me,
And from this bosom light them all anew,
And send them flaming out against the sky.

GABRIELLA

Is there no doom seems even possible?
Are you so blind with him, deafened with life,
That you can have no dream of shadow's wreck,
Nor hear before the tempest falls the cry
Of warning from the lurking, misty rocks?

HELOISE

My faith's the sky above me and 'tis day.
When the night falls I'll have my star again.

GABRIELLA

But if the star vanished, pointing to this place?

HELOISE

It would not be where he should point that I
Should note, but where he faded from my vision.
Then I, too, would no more again be seen,
Being gone to follow after and to find him.

GABRIELLA

Yet the wise sailor in an ominous calm
Furls his glad sails, remembers other storms
And fortifies his ship with preparation.

HELOISE

And I, too, do remember other storms.
They have all fallen, the sky is rid of them.
None can descend, for none remain above.

GABRIELLA

Oh, it is better to be warned before
Than to be solaced after——
*She looks long at Heloise, her eyes full of the message that
she cannot speak.*

HELOISE

Has this meaning?

GABRIELLA

Heloise, upon the road from Paris
I met with Malart.

HELOISE

Alone?

GABRIELLA

Alone.

HELOISE

Oh, speak,
You did not tell me. What have you kept back?
For he is doom's foreboder and tempest petrel,
Shrieking forever on the front of storm——

GABRIELLA

Come, come within this harbor here forever,
Before another and more dreadful wind
Lifts from the deep's grim face to drag you down.

HELOISE

Though danger thunder on danger from the abyss,
I'll keep my eyes set seaward to my haven
And that great anchorage which he holds for me.

GABRIELLA

Then make your eyes of stone, for you must face
A dreadful sunset. I can plead no further.

She rises and moves away.

There are no words.

HELOISE, *following her*

Ah, mother, now forgive me,
I have been selfish, careless, flinty, cruel.
But oh, your sorrow is my sorrow also
And in my heart my arms are close about you
To fold you in a tenderer, nearer way.
We must be tenderer to each other now.

GABRIELLA

Remember that whatever grief assails you,
Here on this island of the terrible world
I wait to welcome you to quietness.
And now, at least, come in and sleep a while.

HELOISE

I could not sleep, my Sweet, I'll wander here,
Maybe my sleep will overtake me here.

GABRIELLA

You must not be alone, even with Sleep;
I'll send you sweet companions, I'll go summon
My happiest loves.

*Going.**Exit, calling.*
Teresa, Monica,

Cecile——

HELOISE, *alone*

Malart! Omen of what new sorrow?
Portent most dreadful of what dreadful grief?
And she—ah, her own sorrow buried deep—
Oh, what's this world that holds me mirrors up
In every face and aspect that I see,
And my own face a mirror that reflects them
Image within image; and within—within—
In infinite vista, sorrow multiplied
Each the deep semblance of my grief's own face.
*Enter from the Abbey and approaching Heloise from behind,
the three young nuns.*

CECILE, *shyly to Heloise*

Please can we not put sadness off to-day?

HELOISE, *turning and seeing the nuns*

What shall we do to make us gay?

CECILE

I know,

Tell fortunes.

HELOISE

Good. Come, Monica, and join us.

Monica has been standing back of the others, looking at Heloise.

CECILE

Sister Monica has a flower for you.

Monica comes forward and gives Heloise a flower.

HELOISE

Ah, that's the thing, I'll tell your fortunes so
Each is a flower.

CECILE

Then what is Monica?

HELOISE

Do we not know our shyest sister here
Full of deep dreams and many hidden hours?

CECILE

I'll never guess her.

TERESA

Tell us.

HELOISE

She is gentian.

CECILE and TERESA

Yes, yes.

HELOISE

—And our best dreamer; see, those bluets
That she is wearing in her fringed eyes,
Are gathered from a sky that knows all secrets.
She reads our hearts as in a brimming glass.

Monica has been looking steadily into Heloise's eyes.

CECILE

Read, Monica, oh, read Lady Heloise——

Monica turns suddenly away.

CECILE

Tell what you saw!

TERESA, *looking at Monica*

She has tears in her eyes.

HELOISE, *taking up another flower*

And here is Heal-All that was once the nun
Brunella, she who prayed to be a flower
That she might with a wiser alchemy
Take sweetness from the earth and dew and air
To work her cures. Then come, Cecile, and wear it,
For this is you.

Giving the flower to Cecile.

CECILE, *looking at her*

Please take it back again
And make it comfort you when you are sad.

TERESA

Tell me what I am.

HELOISE

Yes, let's tell Teresa.

What flower grows wild, gives bread, gets dust upon
it?

What flower is softest and yet has no dreams?
That has wide eyes, yet never a mood in them?
What flower is most content of all?

MONICA

That's mallow.

HELOISE

Sister Teresa is the mallow flower,
And she's the one of us who is most sure
Of happiness.

TERESA

I never wanted it;
I like to sit all quiet in the sun.

CECILE

Tell, what would Mother Gabriella be?

HELOISE

A russet seeming with a heart all red,
A scarlet beacon that makes autumn kinder,
Summer's best promise to the winter gray
That spring will come again—guess.

MONICA

Bitter sweet!

CECILE

That's a good telling. And now tell us yours.

HELOISE

My own? Now here comes blindness back again
And all is hid——

CECILE

Let Sister Monica,
She peers within and sees, as you have said.

HELOISE, *to Monica*

If you see any portent in the world
For me, sweet oracle, be kind, reveal it.

MONICA, *looking at her*

No, you have many thoughts; please tell us some.

HELOISE, *turning away and then coming to them again*

I've only flowers for you, they're happier.
No visions, they're of air, take flowers instead.

She plucks a handful of flowers and shows them.

Here is Herb Robert,—Robin of the Wood
That sheds a rosebeam from a tower of gray—
He's the best comrade for a lonely heart.
And yellow star-grass that swims in a field
When autumn steals the summer's gold away,

And Cyclamen that tries to go from earth
And wins its colored feathers from the sky
To make new wings with; and here's Jewel Weed
That keeps one morning's dew through all its life.
And last of all here is Dream Jasmine for you.

She gives it to Monica.

MONICA

Oh, thank you, does it make a dream come true?

HELOISE

No flower does that. This gives a better dream.

CECILE

You know the flowers' names, come tell them all.
What's this?

Holding up a flower.

HELOISE, *seating herself on the sundial with the nuns*

Ah, now, beware, that's St. John's Wort,
The fairy doorway, on midsummer night
After all's done, the mighty labors ended;
Counting Cecilia's prayers for a whole year,
Planting soft dreams for Monica to gather,
And with the points of moonbeams making combs
To lure this hair to be straight gold again.

Touching Teresa's hair.

Suddenly, swiftly, on the tick of dawn
The sleeping bee booms his faint goblin drum
Once, and the fairies are upon their way.

They do not go on some glad upward path
But enter downward here.

Showing flower.

And as they go,
With hair-fine swords and bee-sting javelins drawn,
They thrust and cut and hew toward this warm
world,
Striking the outward and sweet-seasoned air
And so make sad retreat and disappear.
See, the poor petals are all hacked and stabbed,
By accident the fairy weapons did it.

CECILE

What do they fear outside?

HELOISE

I cannot tell.
The fairy's dead that knew.

TERESA

They must have all
Known once, and afterward forgotten it.

MONICA

And what is this upon the fountain's edge?

Showing flower.

HELOISE

Sea Lavender! But we'll not have that tale.

MONICA

But why?

HELOISE

Too sad.

CECILE

Oh, tell it. Tell such tales.

HELOISE, *taking the flower*

This was the Lady Rosemarine that loved——

CECILE

But that's not sad.

HELOISE

He whom she loved went out
Upon a sad sea journey from her side.
And if on any beach he ever landed,
'Twas not that weary margin where she stood
Waiting.

MONICA

And did he never then return?

HELOISE

He has not yet. And there upon the rocks
With all the weary hours about her head,
The heavy tides asway about her feet,
But with her eyes forever where the sky
Locks fast upon the sea, she clung and held
Until at last she still was there for him,
But was a flower. You always find it low,
Touching the wave at the most seaward places.
Some one has gathered it and brought it here.

MONICA

Ah, Rosemarine. And still there is the ghost
Of red and white about her. Poor sad lady!

CECILE

Why did he not return?

HELOISE

Oh, he will come.
He stays to bring more shining argosies
Laden with glories for her to put on.
Or else he seeks new jewels for her brow.

CECILE

But that would only make it heavier,
And she's aweary in a tattered gown.

TERESA

You said awhile ago that we'd be gay,
But now we are not.

HELOISE, *rising*

No, what shall we do?

TERESA

Did you play games here at the Abbey once?

HELOISE

Why, yes, and I remember all of them.
Let's have one.

TERESA AND CECILE

Yes, yes.

HELOISE

And what shall it be?

The Fountain Song, do you still have it here?

CECILE

Yes.

HELOISE

And *The Dial Sister*?

TERESA

Yes.

HELOISE

What others?

MONICA

Did you play *Mary's Garden*?

HELOISE

I remember.

CECILE

Then that's the one. Come, let us play it now.
Get flowers.

They all gather handfuls of flowers.

HELOISE

Now who'll begin?

MONICA

Teresa, you.

*They join hands and dance in a circle, about the sundial.*TERESA, *singing*

Let us weave a garden for our Mother Mary

CECILE

Where no heart shall harden and no wind shall vary.

MONICA

Then must every flower that ever grew be in it

HELOISE

Life's elusive hour, Love's immortal minute.

*They change and dance about the fountain.*MONICA, *singing*

Every tender daughter brings a gift to sow.

HELOISE

Love shall be the water that shall make it grow.

*She dances forward, takes water in her hand, throws it upward and the dance again changes to the dial.*TERESA, *singing*

Of all the hues that grow in me I bring her of my best.

Throwing daisies on the dial.

CECILE

These lilies from the snow in me and mosses from
my rest.

*Throwing lilies and moss on the dial. They change again
to the fountain.*

MONICA

And cresses from the wave I am for fountains of
her own.

Throwing cresses in the fountain.

HELOISE

If roses she will crave I am the rose that would be
sown.

*Throwing a rose in the fountain. A bell sounds from the
Abbey; they pause.*

CECILE

There is our lady calling, we must go;
So end it.

HELOISE

Let me see—what is the end?

MONICA

Not a sprig of rue——

HELOISE

Ah yes, I know

Singing.

Not a sprig of rue,

They dance again.

MONICA

But to make it true, fernseed from the fairies.

ALL, *with a wild whirl, throwing flowers everywhere*

And the Garden's Mary's!

They stop, out of breath and radiant.

TERESA, *to Heloise, going*

That was the best of all we ever danced——

Exit.

CECILE, *to Heloise*

—And happiest. Let's dance it all again

When we return. Farewell.

Exit.

MONICA, *to Heloise*

Farewell.

Exit.

HELOISE, *to them*

Farewell.

She turns from the departing girls, her cheeks glowing and her whole body filled with the ecstasy of the dance.

Oh, my girlhood, was I glad again?

She takes a step, bringing her to the sundial. Suddenly her eyes light upon it, her face grows radiant, and with a superb gesture she rises to her utmost height and stretches both hands above her to the sky.

Noon! And at last no shadow! Infinite noon!

The over and under vault is all one flame

To light him now and he shall find his way.

Fire all above me and beneath me fire,
Echoing that with which I burn forever.
The three immensities are all one path,
He could not lose the way nor dark defeat him.
Surely the torch I am would be a beacon
Over the world to him if darkness fell.
O sky, be tender to him, earth be safe.
O visible nature and invisible,
Be my two arms for him while these are empty!
Earth be my breast; sky be my heart to him.
And men and women, be—to—him——

Enter through the gate behind her Malart. She falters and looks down upon the dial. Malart's shadow is upon it.

Again?

Here is the shadow back:

She stares at the dial.

A raven's wing
What will the croaking bode this time?

She slowly turns, sees him, and speaks in a dull voice.

What's wrong?

Then starting up wildly to him.

Where is he? You have news of him? He's well?
Never breathe again till you have told me.

MALART

Yes.

HELOISE

Where?

MALART

In Paris.

HELOISE

Safe?

MALART

Safe.

HELOISE

He sent you?

MALART

I come from him.

HELOISE

Then you bear news from him.

Why does he stay? What held him? Sound your note.

What's wrong? Have I displeased him? What's the matter?

He stands silently looking at her.

I find you here—always I seem to find you.

There is something Godlike in such omnipresence.

MALART

Blasphemer.

HELOISE

Oh, the name answers me not!

What does he wish of me?

MALART

There's the wise question;
I bring his wishes.

HELOISE

Then you're welcomer
Than you have ever been to me before.
Tell me his wish.

MALART

You've granted half already
In coming here, compliant to his wish.
Only continue.

HELOISE

How much longer?

MALART, *fixedly*

Always.

HELOISE, *starting and then looking at him with an effort
to smile*

You'll never be a jester, so desist;
You toll a passing bell and they're not worn
On motley.

MALART

No, I ring another bell
To wed you now forever safe to heaven.

HELOISE

At last your threatening madness overtakes you;
But why should all your ravings be of me?

MALART

No madness but his will arisen at last
Welded and knitted with the will of God.

HELOISE

There is a name that I have heard before,
Ringing like lost hope from your iron lips
And always clanged a doom; but now at last,
In your mad aspiration toward Despair
You swing too far—the sound grows meaningless.

MALART

If that's no warning then I'll take the trumpet
And blare you up from the world's grave to life.
Listen.

He produces a letter and reads.

*Heloise—hoard up your remaining respite from pain.
Rescue it from the horrible clutches of this festering world.
Conceal it. Evil surrounds all. Fly from it. Enter the
safe and hiding shadow of the Church. Take the veil.
Farewell. Forget the past.*

HELOISE, *in a monotone*

Who wrote it?

MALART, *meaningly*

Was it I?

HELOISE

Letters of fire

Would not make me believe—

MALART, *continuing to read*

Remember Abelard.

HELOISE

The signature!

She dashes toward him and snatches the letter. Her gaze falls on the unmistakable signature. She mutters to herself, staring at the paper.

Something's confused—only a little ink—

I'll pray it clean again—well, never mind——

She suddenly taps her forehead with her hand.

What's this, what's this? Your madness seems contagious.

She turns.

O God, I'll go and think! I'll have to think.

There's a way out. I'll think it clear for him.

She totters through the doorway into the abbey. Malart looks after her with satisfaction and then begins strolling about the garden. As he nears the gate which he has left open, Abelard enters wildly. He is pale, haggard, and distraught almost to madness. He wears the gown of a monk.

MALART, *staggering back with infinite amazement*

You!—Followed!

ABELARD

As the rain from hideous airs
For rest in the wide sea, so I to her.

MALART, *slowly*

To her?

ABELARD

Is she not here?

MALART, *wonderingly*

She? Now?

ABELARD

Now.

MALART

Thou madman!

ABELARD

Never thwart me. She shall soothe me.

MALART

Despair has made you drunken.

ABELARD

So? Bay on.

Turning from him wildly.

The whole world is a hound to harry me,
The very air's a fang, and all men's eyes
Tear at me as I hurry by their eyes.
Gall is my food. Ashes are in my mouth.
I drink the iron tears of all Despair
And am all poisoned.

He looks toward the abbey.

But the antidote—

Is cool within her hands.

MALART, *confronting him*

Priest, by thy vows

Go back!

ABELARD

Never!

MALART

Thou art ordained of God.

Thou wearest God's cloak upon thee. Sin no further.

ABELARD

I swore those salt and acid oaths in vain,
No medicine they.

MALART

You have denied your God.

Can your mad, selfish sin thus deny Nature?

ABELARD

Nature nor God has given my spirit balm.
But with her fingers she shall twine me back

He continues to look at the abbey.

To life, and with her voice she can recall me.

MALART

Fool, even now she broods upon the letter.

ABELARD

Her eyes will battle past those furious words
And win to me and draw to me and save me.

MALART, *after a pause*

When you were made a priest but three days gone
I told you to forget—

He looks meaningly at Abelard.

but now—remember.

ABELARD, *desperately*

I'll bide no longer.

Calling.

Heloise!

MALART, *trying to prevent Abelard*

God's wrath!

ABELARD, *throwing off his monk's gown*

Off heavy snare! I am no priest to her.

He conceals the gown behind a bench. Enter Heloise. Abelard rushes to meet her and she to meet him, but before they can reach each other Malart passes inflexibly between with his face to Abelard and looking at him. Abelard hesitates, halts, and then almost imperceptibly shrinks back. Malart then stands rigidly at one side looking at him. Heloise impulsively takes another step toward Abelard, but seeing him shrink, she stands still.

HELOISE

All's well now, home is here—

She stretches out her arms.

in these poor arms,

Aching for being too long tenantless.

Abelard continues to stand motionless and silent. She then looks from him to Malart.

Ah, no—you cannot; we will wait.

She gazes at Malart until he begins to retreat slowly and finally makes his exit through the gate, still looking steadily at Abelard. She then turns back to Abelard.

And now—

She starts again toward him but stops. He continues to gaze at her without moving.

Nothing's between us.

She again stretches out her arms. He does not move. She looks at him fearfully and then suddenly brightens.

Oh, forgive—I see—

Yes, it is best to let our eyes drink first
Lest like parched travellers rushing to the well
We drown. Oh, I'll be silent.

ABELARD, *still looking at her from his place*

Speak, speak!

HELOISE

Ah, thank you. Now I see—and it is better
That one should hold the cup, the other sip
And so each guard the other's too great joy.
What shall I talk of? Will you let me choose?
There's the low altar where my baby knees
Grew wearier than they were worshipful.

A cherub and a seraph once lurked there.
I do not see them now—they're shy now.
I used to tiptoe on the dial there;
And watch the birds all climbing the steep air;
They seemed to struggle upward on a quest.
Ah, wingless though I am, yet I have found
More than they dared; and of the dial itself
I used to watch the others come and read it,
And thought that to those happy souls it always
Told the sky's meaning. Now I look at you

She smiles at him.

And all's made plain.

ABELARD

Oh, poison, poison.

HELOISE, *wildly*

Abelard!

She starts to him.

ABELARD

No, no, speak on. Once more I'll try this phantom.

HELOISE, *retreating*

Yes, yes, I must not pause; I see, I know
I must be patient—I'll speak on and on.
Oh, let me batter at this wintry wall.
I'll melt a way to you with my two lips.
Flame against snow shall be my hands for you.
If snow should lie between us——

ABELARD

Hell's broth!

HELOISE, *madly*

Abelard!

ABELARD

All's lost!

HELOISE

Are you not here? Then all is saved.

ABELARD

Lost, lost, you cannot save myself from me.

HELOISE

Your face is glistening pale with some deep sickness,
Something has happened terrible to your brow.
The dying summer has turned and bitten you
With fever.

She takes a hesitating step toward him. He retreats.

Ah, but let me cool your brow.

ABELARD

Do I still seem then only to be sick
Who have been stung into no quiet death?
Well, then I must be only sick, a sickness
Born of no fever.

To himself.

Fever cannot live

In the December runnels of these veins.

HELOISE

Oh, I can give you balm.

ABELARD

Then tell me quickly.
Here stands my spirit, heal it back to life.

HELOISE, *throwing wide her arms*

Home to these arms, here is the life, the healing.
*She waits. He only looks at her. She looks wonderingly
away and sees a figure at a shrine in the cloister.*

Ah, yes, you dread the staring image there.
Sad witness, I will shut the canopy.

She lowers a curtain before the shrine.

ABELARD

Oh, can you shut the leaves upon the trees,
The lidless bubbles on the fountain there,
The opposing stars that testify against me,
The winds that yell upon me out of the north,
Or the south winds that whisper and plot around me?
That cold unwinking dial that portions off
The hateful, snakelike periods of time
In slow and venomous lengths, coil after coil
Watches me—watches me. Heal my vision first;
Give me to look again on the same world,
Or make another.

HELOISE, *yearningly*

Do we need another?

ABELARD

O pitiful physician, is this all?
Drug me at least with words and we will try
How many deaths behind lies my soul's health.

HELOISE

These are the dusty windows of the mind:
Never look out of them, or else cleanse them. See
The tide of tree-tops ebbs and flows above us;
Let it pour down its beauty, drink it all.

ABELARD

Gray, twisted limbs against the weary sky
Fretted to shivering leaves on the cold sky.

HELOISE

Oh, but the fountain never will look strange.
Take all its gladness, it will still have more.

ABELARD

What deadly symbols do you show me. Look,
See how the tortured water in the air
Tries for the sun, part to be blown away,
Part to fall back benumbed, all to be shattered.
And all its aspiration come to naught.

HELOISE

O Love, bring back your eyes, think on us two.
Think how the morning and the evening are,
How they are lovely when we look together.
Think how the dawn has found us glad of Love,
Think how the noon has looked upon us glad,

How the night's pulse has grown to be one bird,
Dripping its music on our double souls,
Melting them to one song. Why the whole earth
Is like a banquet spread before our love,
And I shall wait upon you, you shall see.
Your bread shall be my tender services;
I'll win the golden apples of the west
Out of my mighty willingness for you,
Each dawn shall be a silver cup for you;
Oh, let me hold it, I am strong enough.

ABELARD

So, there's no help. Empty and waste and void.
You only offer me this piteous table.
Do you not see what mocking feast is Life?
Wherein one finds the goblets like as sieves,
Bitter, black wine. And floating motes for food;
How one sits with the sneering life around him
Only to pass unquenched with a groan?
How he who deeply supped for living—dies?
And he who hoped for death in his cup—lives?

He moves away.

And all are troubled with the last year's flies?

HELOISE

These wild distortions are from too much waking,
The eyes will often so revenge themselves.
Come, sleep, and let deep peace flow over you.

She stretches out her hand piteously.

ABELARD, *starting*

Peace! So you have named it! Peace! Peace!
And silence. There's the cordial. Shelter, shelter.
Fly from this hurtling world, get behind walls!
You cannot dodge Life's missiles. Turn away,
Go from the field, I cannot see you crushed.

HELOISE

Your words are strange. I will not understand them.

ABELARD

Grief is not plainer than my meaning was,
Penned in the letter.

HELOISE, *slowly*

The letter, Abelard?

ABELARD, *from this time on he grows gradually calmer
and colder*

The letter.

HELOISE, *starting desperately*

No, I will not understand——

Yes, yes, I can—but oh, I have forgotten.
And you—oh, I can teach you to forget.
I know the impulse of its sudden writing;
How it was false. Remember only truth.
Truth is my love.

ABELARD, *unyieldingly*

Only to shield and save you
I recommend this white and quiet path.

HELOISE

You are distraught. The heated arch of noon
Has bent its fiery fillet on your brow
Searing your brain to utter these wild words.

ABELARD

Madness is what is past; this present light
Is the clear face of reason reappearing.

HELOISE

Do not believe! It's reason's fearful mask.
O Love, what shall I do to tear it off?

ABELARD

Do nothing for my sake but for your own.
Refledge the innocent prayers you once sent up
In this still place, and from Confession's censer
The muttering incense will arise around you,
And always in its mist you will be safe.

HELOISE

To you alone I'll pray, to you confess.

ABELARD

Hell would be fitter than I am to hear.

HELOISE

At least point out the barren, narrow paths
That make the dreadful cell attainable;

If Safety is the thorn where I must hang,
I'll name the things I must be coward to,
And you shall charge and teach me to renounce.

She goes nearer him.

Shall I, remembering the face of Spring,
Lash me with icy midnights to my prayers?
What should I pray for then? Oh, teach me what?
Shall I, remembering that beyond the wall
You dwell—beyond my sight, my touch, my help,
Eat out the past with acid litanies,
And purge me of the very thought of you?

ABELARD

Forget, forget.

HELOISE

How long? And afterward—
Shall I who am with you in this garden here—

She stretches out her arms to him.

Afterward, seeing these flowers who have seen you,
Say to this memory,

Touching a flower.

“I renounce you now,
This rose, this poppy memory, I renounce you”?

ABELARD

You need not then renounce me in your thoughts.

HELOISE

Must I, who in some things am like a child,
Watching and being glad through all the year
To see the rolling seasons of delight,
Creep to sad duties, as to move a bead,
To fix a candle, or to mumble prayers
Always, whose only duty is to you?

ABELARD

Let your first prayer be not to think again.

HELOISE

Shall I deny our earth, our sky—and us?

ABELARD

Only retaliate for that earth and sky
Have cast us off and left us without home.

HELOISE

Must earth be only treading for my feet
While I go seek my ever-hiding soul,
Only the sad, elusive and the far—
And you, of all, unendingly away?
Must I look upward to the sky and find
Only the sky, and never know again
If you are under it and what your need is?

ABELARD

My deepest need is only deepest peace.

HELOISE

But oh, you cannot tell, you swiftly change.
Oh, I could aid you best outside in the world;
I could be serviceable in secret there,
More than behind these dead, preventing walls.
They'd be the very fort of our worst doom
To hurl me back and back and back forever
From my glad, secret battle at your side.

ABELARD

I shall no longer fight. The battle's lost.

He moves coldly away.

HELOISE, *following him desperately*

I cannot and you will not make me go.
I beg you as I love you never ask me.
This hateful, dead renouncement I renounce.
Life and our sky! Its glad cup is too full
To bring to this dead pool. 'Twould overflow
And drown the unaccustomed sippers of it.

He still retreats. She follows him more wildly.

And oh, the little things, my Abelard!
The little things, think of them; how they were,
How, when we found some wondrous thing together,
Of earth or sky or in some moving book,
Suddenly how our eyes were, yours in mine,
And that quick marriage that there then was made.

Those are the myriad filaments that bind us,
Silken, but more than steel. We cannot break them.

She touches his sleeve.

And when sad April, freighted with the rain,
Poured from her chill urn sickness over you,
How you would have no other one to nurse you?
Remember? Abelard.

ABELARD

I'll urge no further.

For it was only that you might escape
The whirling unavoidable disaster
Spilled out upon the world by all the stars
That made me speak. But if it is your doom
It is your doom. And stay then in the world.

HELOISE, *with joy dawning in her face*

Oh, then all's well and I am of your mind;
Let us cast off the very universe,
If this is what you will, but not each other.
What is the world to us? But not each other.
Only each other have and help and cling to.

*She runs blindly to Abelard and is about to embrace him
when Malart enters through the gateway.*

MALART

Oh, damnable sight! 'Twill sear these eyes forever!

Abelard avoids Heloise.

I'll speak now, for I've waited all too long.

ABELARD, *hurriedly to him*

I beg you let it fall more gently on her.

Come, we will go.

He draws Malart toward the gate, but Malart shakes off and starts toward Heloise.

Oh, never tell her now.

MALART, *looking at them both*

She has been charmed into these coils too long.

HELOISE

What sick, delirious words are these he speaks?

Come within, now, and rest. Fever's abroad.

To-morrow, Love, we'll go together—home.

She stretches out her hand appealingly.

MALART

Together! Never while this life is——

ABELARD, *with a wild, threatening gesture commanding silence*

Malart!

HELOISE

Ah, we are wedded. What's to hinder us?

MALART, *lifting Abelard's monk's gown from behind the bench and casting it over Abelard from behind*

His priesthood.

HELOISE, *wildly*

Abelard!

ABELARD, *finally recovering his calmness and drawing the cloak about him*

Three days ago

I entered on my rest.

To Malart.

Now we will go.

HELOISE, *staring desperately at him*

You have not taken all your final vows?

ABELARD

All, and forever, never to abjure

While this life is the wheel it is to wrack me.

HELOISE, *in a steady, dull voice*

And this is why you suffered; that you passed
Out of the world, and afterward remembered,
Remembered and returned to me again.

She pauses.

I could take pleasure even from this thing
But that you suffered. So there's nothing saved.

ABELARD

Silence is never lost, nor timeless peace.

The courts of heaven are all white and still.

Peace is best, for that I'll set my sail.
A little longer your unquiet soul
Will swim through its rough dreams, until at last
It beaches on the dawn and finds its path;
Meet me where peace is.

MALART

Come, the gate will close.

Abelard and Malart go to the gateway and pass through it. The gate clangs shut after them. Heloise has been standing stonily looking after Abelard with staring, unseeing eyes, but as the gate shuts she rushes forward and beats frantically at it.

HELOISE, crying out

The gate is shut and I'll not have it so.
Oh, I can open gates.

Calling wildly.

Remember once

How in the garden there the gate was shut?
I opened it! Remember! Abelard!

The gate swings slowly open, showing no one. Heloise stands staring into the emptiness but making no effort to go through the gateway. There is a pause of absolute silence, then a burst of organ music is heard within the abbey. Gabriella appears standing in the abbey doorway watching Heloise. The music grows louder. Enter a procession of nuns singing. They cross the garden and

*exeunt. Heloise turns and watches them as they go.
She then sees Gabriella and goes slowly to her.*

Mother, now put the veil upon my head.

GABRIELLA

Come, sleep is safe. I'll hold and lull you. Sleep.

HELOISE

Oh, put the veil upon me. Hide this world.
He's gone from it, I'll follow him away.

She looks desperately about.

Yet I remember—oh, but never doubt—
Yet there was once a world—there is a world,
At least we'll be together in one world,
A smaller—we'll be nearer—cover me.

Gabriella leads her pityingly toward the abbey door, embracing her. Exeunt both.

Curtain.

ACT IV

Twenty years later. A road near Châlons. The brow of a hill overlooking a valley. On the left the road enters a wood into which there are also several paths. Back, centre, and at the very edge of the hill is a wayside shrine of white, consisting of two pillars forming a pergola and between them is a figure of the Virgin. Into the base of the shrine a broad ledge is built for the worshippers. Three low steps lead to it. The shrine commands a view of the west and the time is late afternoon of a summer day.

Enter the King, a lad of eight, on horseback. At his side walk a train of attendants, soldiers, and nobles.

THE KING, *halting*

Here is a place where one should pause and pray.

A COURTIER

A kingly thought.

THE KING

Where is my holy nurse?

SECOND COURTIER

Your majesty is much too gracious to her.

THE KING

Why not? She knows the stories. Where is she?

FIRST COURTIER

She paused awhile.

THE KING

Go fetch her.

SECOND COURTIER, *looking off*

She comes now.

Enter Heloise in the robe of an abbess. She goes lovingly to the King.

THE KING

Dearest, here's a pretty place to see.

HELOISE

Yes, my child.

THE KING

It's almost like the picture
In our old fairy-book—except the fairies.

HELOISE

Yes, dear.

THE KING, *drawing himself up proudly on his horse*

I could be brave here.

The courtiers have been regarding Heloise with envious and impatient looks, whispering among themselves.

A COURTIER, *stepping forward*

Royal sir,

You do not need your bravery on this earth,
For we, your courtiers, will be brave for you.

THE KING

No, I must have more courage than you all.
She told me so. Dear, didn't you?

Taking Heloise's hand.

SECOND COURTIER, *looking at Heloise*

That's false teaching.

To the King.

For it destroys your faith in loyalty.

THE KING

I'd trust her first. She's truer than the others.

A SOLDIER, *stepping forward*

Think not of women. Be a mighty king
And lead God's army to His sepulchre.
Burn, mangle, kill the fiendish infidel,
Wrest the true cross from their unholy grip
And bring it to bless France.

THE KING

Yes, that I'll do.

HELOISE

Stay, dear, at home; France is your cross to bear.
Look on those fields—

Pointing to the valley.

Do they seem fair?

THE KING, *looking*

Yes, fair.

HELOISE

Little children are unhappy there.

THE KING, *wonderingly*

What makes them so?

HELOISE

They starve.

THE KING, *sternly*

I'll not have that.

Let them be given sweets.

A COURTIER

Your majesty,

They have enough; the land groans with the harvest.
Much food is in the tillage of the poor——

HELOISE

But not for them.

To the King.

Remember those we passed,
The wailing, clutching ones who cried upon you.

THE KING

I'll make them glad again. I'm a good king.

Enter from the valley three monks. They approach the king, making obeisance.

A MONK

Hail, Anointed One of God.

THE KING, *to those about him*

Who's he?

SECOND MONK

Tidings! A prophet has arisen in your realm,
A glorious youth, a later John, a trumpet!
Crying across the world, "Crusade, Crusade!"
Come to the valley, hear him, and be moved
To avenge the murdered Christ.

THE KING, *to Heloise*

What does he mean?

HELOISE

A preacher speaks below there.

Pointing to the valley.

THE KING, *joyfully*

Will he shout?

A COURTIER

Yes, sire.

THE KING

I'll go and hear him then. I love
To hear men shout. It's better than a drum.

To Heloise.

Dear nurse, your face is white and tired. Rest here,
And wear my purple cloak, it is too heavy.

He casts his purple mantle about Heloise. The courtiers witness it enraged.

Kiss me, and I'll come back to you.

She kisses him.

Lead on.

Exeunt King and all save Heloise. Enter along the road to her, Luce dressed as a nun.

LUCE

How—where's the king?

HELOISE

In evil hands, my Luce.

But he would go. Some voice there in the valley
Will speak; and he would go. Poor baby heart.

She looks lovingly toward the valley, then turns back to Luce.

What of the famished woman? Did she eat?

LUCE

Yes, but her hunger's gnawed her mind, it's gone.
She glowered only, and snapping, dropped her child.
No woman, but a wolf.

HELOISE

She must be housed.

LUCE

They say a hermit's in that wood.

Pointing to it.

I sent

To ask the shelter of his hut for her.

HELOISE

How this fair land is blotted and stained black
To whiten bloody things in Palestine.

LUCE, *sadly*

I must not call that thing or cause unholy
In which my Gervase died.

HELOISE

No—there's one soul
That smiled its way to God all unashamed.

LUCE, *covering her face with her hand*

He was a better man than I had hoped.
Well there,

Wiping her eyes.

Perhaps God's brides must never think
Of dead men.

Enter a page from the wood.

Here's the page I sent to seek
The hermit.

To page.

Did you find him?

PAGE

Find him! Yes.
Would I could lose again the sight of him.

Shuddering.

His lair's a secret bower in green leaves
That tap his window with soft, summer touches.
Its flowers blush for him. I knocked. He rushed
Forth, beastlike, monstrous—crusted all with wounds.
Shrieking "Repent! Repent!" before I'd sinned,
He would not hear me, only howled, "Repent!"
And followed me so bawling.

A harsh voice is heard in the wood approaching.

Here he comes.

*Enter the hermit emaciated, bent, running with his hands
raised above him.*

THE HERMIT

Fly, fly from the wrath of righteous God!

He faces Heloise.

HELOISE

Malart!

MALART

What! Scarlet Babylon has come back again.
I thought I heaped the ashes over her.

Looking at her intently.

Woe, woe, these twenty years have not sufficed.

HELOISE

Yes, truly you were kindler of that fire
That has consumed my life.

MALART

Was it not well
That such an evil as that life should be
Brought low to dust?

HELOISE, *turning from him*

Is he all madman, Luce?
Or would some words of mine eat through the shell
And burn into the man?

LUCE

Spend a few on him.
I'll pray that they may lash him to some hell.

HELOISE, *turning and going near him*

Malart, come forth from this bleak tomb of years.
Know that the deadly curse you heaped upon us
Availed not but to make me suffer. I
Am his, and my thoughts never are of heaven,
For earth is still his dwelling.

MALART

Hopeless Devil,
Then is my weary labor all to do
Over until the smoke of your red burning
Goes up forever and forever?

LUCE, *taking Heloise's hand*

Come,
You cannot reach him; all the man is dead,
Only the curse remains.

HELOISE, *moving away*

The curse indeed.

MALART, *following her fiercely*

So I must set you now newly afire,
And blow your embers to a new-made flame
To scorch you deeper; know you where he is?

HELOISE, *turning desperately to him*

Oh, if you know, be merciful now at last
And give me news of him.

MALART

News I will give you,
And without mercy; he is near you now!

HELOISE

Near?

MALART

And now falls my lash; he is in anguish.

HELOISE

Oh, where?

MALART

Even that I'll tell and add that fagot more.
Beyond this wood in St. Marcellus Abbey!

HELOISE, *starting back on the road*

I'll go.

MALART, *going in front of her*

So now I have you at the stake.

Marcellus gates are built—locked—barred against
you,

Being a woman. So be helpless here

As he is helpless near you.

HELOISE

So you dreamed

That stone or steel could hold me from him now.

Then you have failed at last—this destined arrow
Spreads to a blessing.

She stands victoriously before him.

And I thank you.

To Luce.

Come.

To Malart as she goes.

Will you not watch us meet?

MALART, *shrieking*

Woe of the world,

I'll find a way to bring you further bitter

Till you are poisoned all.

LUCE, *drawing Heloise away as they depart*

Come, come away,

I cannot hear him and be still a nun.

Go find the abbey. I will seek the woman

To give her further food, then follow you.

HELOISE, *halting perplexedly at the wood into which two paths lead. Then she chooses one of them*

It must be by this path. It is the whiter.

LUCE

I'll go a little with you and help find it.

Exeunt Heloise and Luce.

MALART, *looking after Heloise as she goes*

Avaunt Sathanas! *Retro!*

He turns with raised and clenched fists.

Let me only

Behold her at the last, and be avenged.

Enter several people hastily along the road from the left and exeunt severally across and down the hill.

Children of Wrath, why breathless to the tomb?

He lays hold of one of them, a young monk, and detains him.

THE YOUNG MONK

Breathlessly, and eagerly looking toward the valley.

The preacher!

MALART

Where?

THE YOUNG MONK, *pointing*

Within the valley there,

We run to hear him. Haste. I shall be late.

MALART, *still detaining him*

All clamorers are not of God; he may be
An evil prophet.

THE YOUNG MONK, *radiantly*

No, a glorious one.

His words are burning doves that nest within,
Calling and drawing hope and giving wings
To dare for all desire. He summons all
To get Christ's cup and rood from infidels!

MALART

How know you?

THE YOUNG MONK

I have heard him yesterday.
None preaches like the mighty Astrolobus——

MALART, *starting violently*

Ha! Astrolobus!

THE YOUNG MONK

And withal, a youth
No older than myself.

MALART, *clutching him*

Where rose this preacher?

THE YOUNG MONK

At Cluny he was nurtured by the monks.

MALART, *releasing him and turning away*

'Tis he! O thou avenging Host, I thank thee!
Here is my scourge.

THE YOUNG MONK, *going*

Farewell now.

MALART, *going toward him*

Hold and hear:
Shall one born out of wedlock be God's priest?

THE YOUNG MONK

It is forbidden.

MALART

Shall he take God's name
On his unlawful lips? Shall he guide souls
To heaven, who cannot enter in himself?

THE YOUNG MONK

Never! But why detain me with such sorrow?

MALART

He whom you rush to hear is such a one.

THE YOUNG MONK

Oh, dreadful and impossible!

MALART, *watching him*

You have heard
The tale of that great leman, Heloise?

THE YOUNG MONK

Yes, heard it, and on many a midnight wept.

He pauses, thinking solemnly.

And yet—she took God's veil.

MALART, *slowly*

Her shame came after.

THE YOUNG MONK

O sorrow.

MALART

In its earliest hour of life

The child was rescued from her and was given
To learn sad penance in dark Cluny's cloisters,
And there named—Astrolobus!

THE YOUNG MONK, *wonderingly*

It is he!

MALART

Woe, woe, blasphemous he, who should be plunged
In endless silence, penitential tears—
Walks barefaced on the world and prates of souls,
Fills his unholy mouth with holy names—

He suddenly turns upon the young monk, watching the effect of his words.

Duty now calls us to stop up those lips
By wide revealing of his shame.

THE YOUNG MONK, *grave with conviction*

Oh, sad!

MALART, *still watching him*

Before the congregation utterly
Abase him.

THE YOUNG MONK, *going*

If it must be, I will hasten
And hear a little first.

Exit, running down the hill.

MALART, *going after him*

Now triumph come,
Here is the net in which my world is caught.

Exit. Enter from the woods a young acolyte hurriedly, followed by Peter of Cluny. The abbot is aged and frail and goes with great difficulty by the aid of a staff.

THE ACOLYTE

Ah, Father Peter, we'll not be in time.

PETER, *hobbling painfully*

I come swiftly.

THE ACOLYTE, *returning to him*

Let me help you.

PETER

Off,

Time will aid me.

THE ACOLYTE

But time is so slow.

PETER

It's fast enough for what it brings us to.

VOICES OUTSIDE, *on the road behind them*
Hail.

PETER, *turning*

Who's there?

Enter along the road two papal guards, followed by a Pope's messenger.

ACOLYTE, *joyfully*

What, strangers?

PETER

Benedicite.

A GUARD

Way for the Nuncio of holy Rome.

PETER

What, the Pope's messenger at last!

NUNCIO, *halting*

Good brother

Can you direct us to Marcellus' Cloister?

PETER

I can, for there I once renounced the world
At six months' age. Yet even then the world

He mutters.

Was old. But I shall not be young again.

NUNCIO

And does one Abelard abide there still?

PETER

He seems to; mark I say, he only seems.

He peers long at the Nuncio.

Your face is sombre. *Absit omen.*

NUNCIO

Yes,

I come upon a dreadful errand here.

PETER, *sadly*

Oh, never say the holy father judged
Against him.

NUNCIO

I bear news to him of that.

He has been excommunicated wholly
And dreadfully cast forth from out the Church.

PETER, *turning toward the wood with an agonized face*

O my brother! thou art brother still.

Would I might drink this one last cup for thee!

Turning again to the Nuncio.

Read me the excommunication now,
That I may know what thin and watery reasons
Temper the steel of it.

NUNCIO

Then listen.

He takes from his bosom a great black parchment sealed with a red seal. He breaks the seal and unfolds it.

Reading.

For

His treasonable designs against the Rood,
By planting pagan thoughts among the youthful,
For vile pollution of the eucharist,
By eating—without faith—at high communion,
For blasphemies against the word of God,
By praising dead and damned philosophers—
Calling one Aristotle worthy of heaven——

PETER, *turning away*

Enough! I'll not hear more. The end is come.

NUNCIO, *going toward the wood, followed by the guards*

Is this the path?

PETER, *starting*

Hold! Stay the horrid blow
A few poor breaths: he follows slowly here
To hear one in the valley. He will come
Presently to this place. Wait here for him.
Run not to meet him freighted with this curse!

NUNCIO

Why that is kindly, I bear him no malice,
But am here only God's poor sword-bearer.
I'll wait his coming.

He returns and seats himself.

Will he die, think you?

PETER

Die? Death is not the thought—I cannot tell
Whether it will revive him into death.
He is a cloud that has forgot its rain,
Dry, dry, such as in deserts in a drought
Come in the air and are and are not seen;
Nor white nor dark, nor hot nor cold, but sick,
Sick with a fever of a fever's end.
And yet give forth no sickness, but are poisoned
Within themselves, too piteous to be feared,
Too listless to be hoped for, only pity
Goes up to them.

NUNCIO

I think death would be welcome
To such a man.

PETER

If he had but received it
Long ago. But he has lingered past it,
And now it shuns him. For these twenty years

He has been fighting in a heavy fight,
Without Life's armor on. Bernard has conquered.

A sound without in the wood. He turns and points.

Lo, he approaches even now his doom,
His last, dread fate. See there, can you not stay
The course?

NUNCIO

God's stony will be done as ever;
I cannot change it, though I gladly would.

*Enter from the wood Abelard, weak and stricken as by illness.
He walks with his head bowed and is supported by two monks.*

A MONK, to his fellow

Rest here, he can no further go.

*The two monks support Abelard to the ledge of the shrine,
where he sinks slowly down with his eyes closed. Peter
goes to him and speaks aside to him.*

SECOND MONK, turning to Peter and the Nuncio

Good brothers,

You pause here?

PETER

We, like you, would rest, and here
We met with strangers.

ABELARD

Many strangers come,
But none go strangers.

FIRST MONK

He speaks of this world.

PETER

Abelard, I pray you, fix your weary eyes
Not upon this poor world but on the other.

ABELARD

Once I was cursed with blindness, now my woe
Is too clear vision.

PETER

Surely both of these
Cannot be sorrows, but if one must be,
The other is a joy.

ABELARD

The world's still here,
Still to be seen—if seen, then shuddered at.
If fallen upon in darkness, 'tis a marsh
That overwhelms at last our glowworm fires.

PETER

All is not treacherous lowland on this earth.
The heights are still above.

ABELARD

And I have seen them
A naked warning, never struggle up:
They're made to fall from.

PETER

Is there then no hope
That you may yet again mount up that path
And win the sky at last?

ABELARD

I lie here torn
Low at the stony base upon the plain,
Waiting one thing alone, a word from Rome
For confirmation that I did not fall
In vain.

PETER, *after a pause pointing to the west*

See brother, even now the sun
After its day-long climbing toward desire
Sinks ruinous to its sombre, silent doom,
And out of all the void there is no voice
To say "Well done," then how much less can you
Hope to receive such blessed benison?

ABELARD

Yet it must come, there must be that one light,
Else I'll not know how large the darkness is.

PETER

There are abysses void of any star.

ABELARD

But there are stars beyond, useless, dry, cold.
Yet they will light my grave and show to others
Why it was dug, or show to me at least
How deep it is.

PETER, *looking apprehensively from time to time at the Nuncio, who, however, remains standing motionless gazing at Abelard and holding the excommunication behind him*

We all must have our graves.

ABELARD

I needed none, for I am my own tomb,
And every day digs uselessly for me.
Already buried, none shall find me out
Save at the end. Day after day till then
Passes above me futile to assault
As it is feeble to bring blessing on me.
None can uncover me save that last hour
Which Rome shall send me that I may have peace.

NUNCIO, *taking a few steps toward the hill and then turning back to Abelard*

Brother, the sun is down.

ABELARD

That's one day more.

I'll look upon now where it was.

There will a glory dwell about it now,

Since it is useless to make warm the world.

He moves as though to rise; the two monks lift him and support him to the brow of the hill where he stands gazing at the sky.

PETER, *indicating the excommunication which hangs in the inert hand of the Nuncio who gazes after Abelard*

You did not give it.

NUNCIO, *starting*

No, nor ever shall.

While this heart's human pity wields the act

I could not; but——

Turning to Peter.

A friend like you should do it.

PETER

Never. Destroy it.

NUNCIO

It is worth my life.

Rome still must be obeyed. It must be given.

PETER

Who then shall do it?

NUNCIO

One without a pulse.

ACOLYTE

I have it!

PETER

Who?

ACOLYTE

The hermit.

PETER

Who is he?

ACOLYTE

He dwells near by, a lean and pious man,
So burning with his duty unto God
That it has charred all nature's blood in him.

NUNCIO

He must be then the one we passed below
Rushing with upraised hands.

ACOLYTE

Gray?

NUNCIO

Yes, and fierce.

ACOLYTE

'Tis he.

NUNCIO

Let us go down and give it to him.

PETER

Abelard is too weak to journey farther.
The hermit shall return and find him here
And so deliver it. I'll follow him.

ACOLYTE

Hush now—he turns, they bring him back to us.

*The two monks support Abelard back to the ledge of the shrine,
where he sinks in a reclining posture as though fainting.
One of the monks puts the cowl over Abelard's face.*

PETER, *to the two monks*

We go upon an errand to the valley.
Bide here with him—be tender—so farewell.

*Exeunt down the hill Peter, the Acolyte, the Nuncio and his
guards.*

FIRST MONK

Now we'll not hear the preacher.

SECOND MONK

And I've dreamed
This fortnight that he was St. John, and I
Should look upon him.

FIRST MONK

We are punished thus
For being eager.

SECOND MONK

I am punished always
For any longing; it is God's good way.

Enter slowly from the wood Heloise.

FIRST MONK

Who's this? A Sister! She's the one shall stay.

SECOND MONK

Oh, 'tis a blessing sent.

FIRST MONK, *pointing to the cowed figure of Abelard*

Good Sister, see
An ailing brother fallen on the way.
Come, minister to him while we make haste
Unto the congregation there below.

SECOND MONK

At last I'll hear.

Going.

FIRST MONK

Hasten, he may be ended.

Exeunt the two monks. Heloise goes to the reclining figure with impulsive pity. She lifts the cowl. His face is disclosed. She starts back and Abelard half rises.

HELOISE, *wildly*

Abelard!

ABELARD, *faintly*

Heloise!

HELOISE

O my immortal love!

ABELARD, *passing his hand before his eyes*

Have not the years prevailed against this dream,
That it must touch again the air about me?

HELOISE

No dream is here, but the awakening.

ABELARD, *weakly looking at her*

I see——

*He pauses with sinking head.*HELOISE, *touching him pityingly*

You shudder as from blighting cold.

ABELARD

I am enshrouded in a frozen world
That makes my marrow ice——

He pauses.

And who shall melt it?

HELOISE

Touch but this hand. It seems as it could pour
Even too much fire upon you.

ABELARD

Never.
But to warm me,

HELOISE

You pale—an illness is upon you.

ABELARD

My illness is not ruled by mortal change;
I am Pain's self and live beyond despair.

HELOISE

Can you take nothing of healing from my hands,
My Source! from whom my springs of life arose
Brimming their full banks with a mighty flood
That has been lowered never since it rose
Deep from your heart?

ABELARD

My life these many years
Has languished dry like sand and I have walked
Within a world robbed of its rain and dew,
Pent in myself as underneath a roof
That kept off heaven and let in the world.

HELOISE

There is an ebb to sorrow oftentimes,
When tears have drowned the topmost flower of grief.

ABELARD

If I had any longer any tears,
You too would wash away.

HELOISE

Can you not weep?

ABELARD

I never wept except as poets do,
Whose tears are only tears while they are heard.

HELOISE

You name the poet's mind without the heart;
You never drew me by the mind alone.

ABELARD, *continuing as though unhearing*

That conscious face I wore before the world
Has turned upon itself to rend and tear me,
And is a Gorgon that has struck me dumb.
Expression is a sweet I've lost the taste of,
And it is flatter now than silence is.
I am a harp unstrung—nothing is emptier.

HELOISE

Ah, you forget—you never were of old
Moved to emotion by a conscious mood,
But ever lived your hours too blindly eager.

ABELARD

My soul was prism-like and seized upon
All hues of life out of clear-seeming air,
Only to pass them through me into color.
None—none were held, and now the glass is dulled.
Lo, there is no man there that seemed to hold it.

HELOISE

I am one color that remains to you.

ABELARD

The world is parched and a desert thing
When I, the fountain that would make it green,
Cannot reflect its greenness in myself.

HELOISE, *looking at him long*

Now if you ever doubted, oh, believe
That in the end all will be well with us;
That merciless lance of this, your new-found vision,
Shall be a light that shall illumine the mists
That damped and ailed this mortal life of yours,
Making it fretful, sick, and feverous.

ABELARD

The years have put a candle in my hand
Too late. Midnight has come. The void surrounds
me.
Black, limitless; I cannot see the way.
My light is guttering now.

HELOISE

Believe, believe!

Cling to that glory that enfolded us
Upon the instant of our earliest kiss,
For it is symbol of a saving thing;

Though we groped upward from a blind abyss
Into the world, did we not find each other?
And at that meeting something was as flame
That shall not fade or fail to tell our eyes
The radiant promise of this world to us,
Who burn across it to abide beyond.

ABELARD

I only lived by day, the night's uncharted.

HELOISE, *pointing to the west. It is now after sunset*

See how that sunken glory in the air,
Filling the west with the old altar fire,
Beacons its promise of dawn following.
And how the twilight star's imperial tear
Sheds its most white atonement on the world
For what the day has lost and sinned against.

ABELARD

Lost, sinned against—the words are chosen well.

He slowly looks up at her.

What do you wish of me?

HELOISE, *moving as though she had been smitten; she hesitates and then speaks*

Oh, I am young——

She pauses an instant.

I am not old. Can I not, with my strength
Raise you from this affliction of blank pain?

ABELARD

I have a strength too great. It lasts too long.

He pauses.

One thing I linger for—to see the end.

For all my once-wild faith, my dreams, my hopes
Have shrunk and narrowed to this lean belief,
That in the end I shall be justified.

HELOISE

Are you not justified that we shall conquer?

ABELARD, looking at her

Sister, I speak of Europe, not of us,
The mind of the world, that I, having once died,
Lived on to save. Oh, I have suffered earth
That I might heal the sickness of itself.
For Reason's sake I have been spurned and stoned
From every cloister in this faith-blind land.
I totter on the wall, but here I conquer.

He looks up with rising energy and a glow of the old fire.

I have appealed to Rome——

HELOISE, starting

To Rome, my Soul?

ABELARD

There my salvation and all Europe's is.
The Pope shall save me and with me the world.
Here I await his salvos for my life.

HELOISE, *swiftly*

But if his mandate is against the stars?

ABELARD

It cannot be—my vindication's sure.

HELOISE, *imploringly*

O Love, keep back some faith from this adventure;
Hazard not all in the old blinder way.

No ship from Rome bears argosies of Reason,
Keep back a little faith to live upon
If this frail vessel sink beneath the sea.

ABELARD

I am a fruit tree blasted, and I cling
Even to autumn by a single leaf.
I have long been kin to it, and with cold fingers
It shall erase me from this troubled field.
Only let not my agony be in vain;
Only to see the heritage I die for
Lives and is safe.

His head sinks.

HELOISE, *piteously*

I pray you, Love, withhold
Your blind reliance on so wraithlike hopes.

She pauses, then leans toward him, speaking quickly.

Fix all your gaze upon that other hope
Born of our love and clothed on with its fire
Of prayer and tears.

ABELARD, *looking at her wonderingly*

You speak some mystery.

HELOISE

Of whom I told in letters long ago.

ABELARD

Letters I had, but naught of hope in them.

HELOISE, *slowly*

You heard not of him from me ever?

ABELARD, *gazing at her*

Him?

HELOISE, *turning*

Not even to have shared this thing together.

ABELARD, *still following her with his eyes*

Together——?

HELOISE, *turning back to him*

Afterward—oh, afterward——

She pauses.

Our love put on mortality—a son!

She sinks down beside him, covering her face with her hands.

ABELARD

A son—to me?

HELOISE

At veiled Argenteuil

My joy and sorrow knew its height and depth.

ABELARD, *staggering to his feet*

He lives?

HELOISE

They took him in his earliest hours,

But I in secret watch him in the world.

The Church possesses him—he grows in strength.

He knows not of us nor suspects his birth.

ABELARD, *reeling and raising his hands triumphantly to the sky*

At last! O thou uneven thing in the air

Made like a balance, Justice, I have conquered

And all the leaden evil is outweighed.

I'll go——

He totters and sinks down upon the ledge.

Ha—weakness—on an hour like this?

Raise me and lead me to him from this darkness.

Into his hands the battle shall be given:

His heritage, the star that I have clutched at,

Shall be laid on him as a white commission.

And for his battle-cry and holy banner

For shield, for fortress, he shall have the word

Of commendation I await from Rome!

For it is true he cannot fight without

That sure defence.

HELOISE

O my World, hold and stay
From plunging on this unknown orbit now.

ABELARD

The fires he sheds shall warm my frozen way.

HELOISE

I know not where he is. We could not find him.
His road is chosen. We must not fetter him.

From the road that leads down into the valley a sound has been heard growing as of many people approaching. Wild cries are heard. Abelard and Heloise stand listening. The tumult increases. Enter a throng of people from the valley, yelling taunts and pointing derisively back along the road. Some of them throw sticks and stones in that direction. They cross the stage and exeunt noisily. Enter from the valley Astrolobus, the object of their insults. He staggers wildly along the road, covered with dust and bruises. Heloise has stood stricken with apprehension since the noise began. She now starts on beholding him. He sees her, stops and addresses her fiercely. Abelard is still seated on the ledge back of Heloise, his eyes fixed on Astrolobus. It is twilight.

ASTROLOBUS

Staring at Heloise.

Ah, you—you— I have often seen your face,
But now I know you, what you are to me.
Well shameless cause, look on your shamed effect,
For I am outcast, bloody, spit upon.

I know your story out of common ballads.
Why? Why? Say in what way had I unborn
Ever done injury to you or wronged you
That you should body forth my soul in shame?

Enter Malart also from the valley road. He goes with triumphant malice to Abelard and gives him the excommunication. Abelard stares at it, clutches at his breast and sinks prostrate on the ledge behind Heloise, who has not even noted the entrance of Malart, but stands with her eyes fixed on Astrolobus, who continues. Exit Malart.

Unjust, unjust. My earthly life is gone,
And holy writ has said that such as I
Cannot inherit ever the kingdom of heaven.
Oh, I have been ambitious, I loved life;
I would have outshone morning. I breathed rain-
bows.

I have exhorted men to win the cross,
And now they will and I'll not be the reason.
I must go scorned, gnashing to the dark.
You planted foul seeds darkly long ago
And I'm the fruitage. Well, then, I'll taste bitter:
May that same darkness be your dwelling always.
May unappeasable despair forever
Gnaw you. Burn. Freeze. Never forget my words.
May they make hell a respite from your torment.

Starting to go.

Lost, lost! Where's justice? Who will pity me?
Exit along the road.

HELOISE, *starting wildly after him*

Ah, no, no—Astrolobus!

He does not return. She turns slowly and sees Abelard prone upon the ledge.

Abelard!

She goes swiftly to him, bending over him.

This is not all. There's no surrender now.

We must not lose him. He at least shall be

Won from the field if we still fight for him.

She pauses, staring at him, then sees the excommunication. She picks it up, opens it and reads.

What's this? Your freedom—I will share it with
you——

Look up! Only believe—here's hope—Look!
Waken!

She bends over him, looks at his face, takes his hand and puts her head to his breast, listening. She rises, clutching her brows and looking upward.

Can this be all?

She pauses, then looks again at Abelard.

No, no. It is the doubt,
The doubt that numbs us and makes all defeat.
But I—believe!

She leans over Abelard's body, embracing it.

This is not twilight now.
You are about me brightly in the air.
Shine, then, upon this altar while I lay
New vows upon it of more service to you.

She looks up.

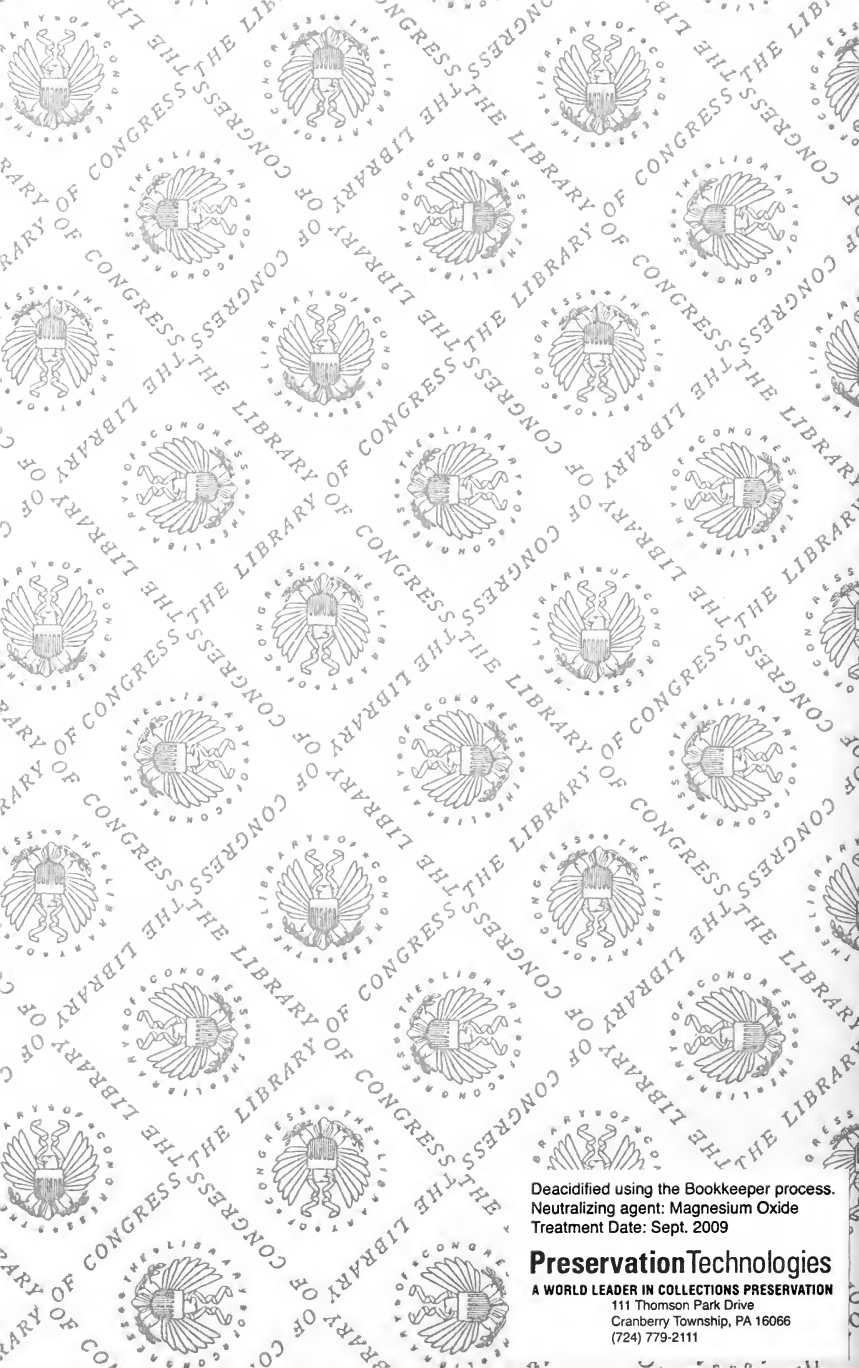
For I'll live on and seek him out and win him
Before I follow you to other fields.
So hear me where you now are and be strong.
Keep up the battle till I come to you,
And watch, protect, and shield him.

She turns her gaze again upon Abelard's rigid form.

Abelard!

Curtain.

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Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
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